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MESSAGES THAT MADE THE REVIVAL

MESSAGES THAT MADE THE REVIVAL

Being a Presentation of the Main Teachings of Wesley and His Helpers

BY

HAROLD C. MORTON, B.A.

For the use of Local Preachers, Sunday School Teachers, and other Officials and Members of the Methodist Churches

WITH A FOREWORD BY

DINSDALE T. YOUNG

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FOREWORD

My whole heart goes with these 'Messages.' Mr. Morton did well to publish them in the *Wesley Bible Union Journal,* and he does well to re-issue them in this form.

We cannot be recalled too continually to the great fundamental truths which made the Revival.

I am assuredly convinced that those truths alone can re-make the Churches of to-day, and save the sinful world of to-day.

Some appear to imagine that they can successfully prosecute John Wesley's evangelism without John Wesley's theology.

I am intensely persuaded that this is a vain dream. Organized Christianity is deplorably feeble to-day, and a reversion to truly evangelical teaching is its only hope.

May these strong and seasonable 'Messages' be used of the Holy Spirit among preachers and among people! And may we all lift up the standard of the Cross 'till He come'!

DINSDALE T. YOUNG.

PREFACE

I need not say that this little book makes no pretence to original statement. It is a presentation of the Teachings of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, as contained in the Standards of that Church, viz. the Forty-Four Sermons of John Wesley, and his Notes on the New Testament. My own share in this volume has been to select passages which state the teachings of those standards; and to provide, here and there, some brief expositions, designed to meet certain of the difficulties especially felt to-day.

May God make use of this little volume to enlighten the mind and establish the heart of the reader in the Truths of His Most Holy Word.

HAROLD C. MORTON.

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Messages that Made the Revival

I

INTRODUCTORY

NOTHING more than a passing glance at the Gospels is required in order to perceive that our Divine Lord expected the preaching of the Truth to be the great instrument for the advancement of His Kingdom. Truth is the seed, and from the sowing of that seed comes the harvest. The seed is the Word. The Truth, the whole Truth, nothing but the Truth, will produce the longed-for harvest. Therefore the great question in every age is this—Is the Truth being declared? Is it declared free from error? Is it being made supreme?

Amid the depravity and darkness of the early eighteenth century, when faith was fast becoming a matter for laughter and religion bade fair soon to be found only in books, a little band of men arose who seized fast hold of many of the supreme truths of Divine Revelation. They had made the Bible their dwelling-place, and from their prayerful sojourn in its pages they came forth into the life of England fired with a tremendous conviction. This Bible was God's own veritable love-message to mankind. Its great thoughts were the eternal verities of life and death, of time and immortality. Because, these living words from God were neglected, scorned, rejected, therefore mankind

was perishing without God and without hope. Fired with that tremendous conviction they went out. They declared the truth with burning ardour. They drove away false doctrine contrary to God's Word. In their lips and lives the truth was made supreme; and by them God turned England most gloriously upside down. They were the early Methodist preachers.

'We too are Methodists,' say the Methodists of to-day; 'how is it that the same truths preached by us do not produce the same effects?' The need of the world is very great to-day also, and though in many ways, as compared with the England of the eighteenth century, the England of to-day is swept and garnished, every one who holds the evangelic faith is quite convinced that the same effects are needed to-day and ought to follow. Why do they not do so? Those who do not accept the evangelic Faith say it is because 'in the course of evolution the world has become so much better that there is no longer the need for Regeneration which used to exist.' Others think that the changes are taking place still, 'the miracles of grace' are happening, but they are not perceptible because of the high moral level of to-day. Others say that this is one of those periods when Divine Wisdom designs that religion shall be ineffective, but a turn of the tide will surely come. And so forth—many excuses which satisfy nobody. The plain answer really is that the old messages do not generally have a chance to-day. Truth to be effective requires conviction in the utterance; and the burning ardour of conviction is ever becoming a rarer and yet rarer thing. Said the archbishop to

Betterton, the actor: 'How is it that you actors produce more effect with your fables than my clergy with their truths?' And Betterton replied: 'May it please your Grace, your clergy utter truth as if it were fiction, and we actors utter fiction as if it were truth.'

But that is not all that has to be said. It is even more serious to have to say that the reason why the old messages are ineffective is that some of them are for the most part simply left out. Others are quietly *implied* instead of being fervently *preached*. Others are not infrequently denied and contradicted. What the old messages of truth would do if the Methodist Preachers of to-day preached them again with the old conviction, without fear and without favour, has yet to be proved to the present generation. Alas, early Methodism is not further away in time than that fervent conviction is in spirit from the average Methodism of to-day.

But what are those messages? It is a truism that the twentieth-century Methodist has but the slightest acquaintance with the Standard Doctrines of his Church. For a long time we have felt that there is deep need for us to give in brief and concise fashion and in as readable a form as possible the main teachings of the Standard Sermons of John Wesley.

Wesley's own words in the Preface to the Sermons are wonderfully suitable to the life of to-day, particularly because we are told by our critics that these matters are matters for scholars and not for the bulk of mankind. That has never been admitted in any age of living faith; and if this age is to regain its religious virility, that view will

have to be steadily repelled. 'The following sermons,' says Mr. Wesley, 'contain the substance of what I have been preaching for between eight and nine years past. During that time I have frequently spoken in public, on every subject in the ensuing collection; and I am not conscious that there is any one point of doctrine, on which I am accustomed to speak in public, which is not here incidentally, if not professedly, laid before every Christian reader. Every serious man who peruses this will therefore see in the clearest manner what these doctrines are which I embrace and teach as the essentials of true religion.'

'But I am thoroughly sensible,' he goes on, 'these are not proposed in such a manner as some may expect. Nothing here appears in an elaborate, elegant, or oratorical dress. If it had been my desire or design to write thus, my leisure would not permit. But, in truth, I at present designed nothing less; for I now write, as I generally speak, *ad populum*, to the bulk of mankind, to those who neither relish nor understand the art of speaking; but who, notwithstanding, are competent judges of those truths which are necessary to present and future happiness. I mention this that curious readers may spare themselves the labour of seeking for what they will not find.'

To the statement of the great truths which Wesley expressed with such tremendous emphasis and passionate conviction in the Standard Sermons, we shall therefore hope to give some few pages month by month until the tale is made complete.[1] Under

[1] These chapters are a re-print from the pages of the *Journal* of the Wesley Bible Union.

God, it was these messages which created the Revival. Unspeakably blessed was the harvest of that early and passionate sowing; and just as certainly as the farmer needs the same seed year by year if he is to reap the same harvest, just so certainly must we lose ourselves in the same glowing evangel if we would reap the same harvest of Salvation in the present day.

II

THE UNERRING WORD

Methodism began in the Bible. The explanation of the mighty movement which revolutionized the Anglo-Saxon race and built up the Empire ultimately comes to this—that a little company of earnest men immersed themselves for years in the study of the Bible. It was especially the study of the New Testament, though it embraced the Bible as a whole. So intent were they on the things of God that they could not get away from His Word. It drew them as the moth is drawn to the flame. 'Bible Moths,' men called them in derision; but these moths were not burnt up, they were only kindled at the flame. They burned with fire and yet were not consumed. They made their dwelling-place the wondrous Word in which the breath of God is ever moving: and the Spirit of Fire entered into them, purified them, set their souls on fire. In the days of the Puritan Revival, says J. R. Green, the Bible had England to itself, and those mighty Puritan fires were kindled because we became the people of one book, and that book the Bible. So too with the earlier Revivals: and the Book which explains Lollardy, and Protestantism, and Puritanism, explains Methodism also. Methodism stands or falls with the Bible.

Protestantism has always realized that its whole fortune is staked on the Bible, and we all know that it is in the proper sense supremely true that the Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of

Protestants. Methodism, true Methodism, knows this well. Methodism is impenitently and incorrigibly Protestant. 'These are the general rules of our Society,' says John Wesley in the well-known passage 'all of which we are taught of God to observe, even in His Written Word, *the only rule and the sufficient rule both of our faith and practice.*'

Upon all matters spiritual and moral the Bible is our absolute authority, and from it there is no appeal. That is written upon the surface, and also runs through and through the texture, of the system called Methodism. Writing to the Rev. Dr. Dodd in 1756, with reference to his teaching upon Christian Perfection, given in the sermon entitled 'The Circumcision of the Heart,' now numbered xvii. in his *Works,* Wesley says: 'I build on no authority, ancient or modern, but the Scripture. If this supports any doctrine, it will stand: if not, the sooner it falls the better. Neither the doctrine in question, nor any other, is anything to me, unless it be the doctrine of Christ and His Apostles.' That statement is absolutely and unquestionably typical of the whole of the Doctrinal Standards of our Church.

These Doctrinal Standards are, first, the Forty-Four Sermons; and, second, the Notes upon the New Testament. To each of these there is a Preface, and in each Preface the statements concerning the Bible are unequivocal. In the Preface to the Sermons he says:

'My design is, in some sense, to forget all that ever I have read in my life. I mean to speak, in the general, as if I had never read one author, ancient or modern

(always excepting the inspired). . . . I want to know one thing—the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God Himself hath condescended to teach the way: for this very end He came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it. Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri*.[1] Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone: only God is here. In His presence I open, I read His book; for this end, to find the way to heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? Does anything appear dark or intricate? I lift up my heart to the Father of Lights: Lord, is it not Thy Word, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God"? Thou givest liberally and upbraidest not. Thou hast said, "If any be willing to do Thy will, he shall know." I am willing to do. Let me know Thy will. I then search after and consider parallel passages of Scripture, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. . . . I have accordingly set down in the following sermons what I find in the Bible concerning the way to heaven; with a view to distinguish this way of God from all those which are the inventions of men. I have endeavoured to describe the true Scriptural experimental religion, so as to omit nothing which is a real part thereof, and to add nothing thereto which is not. . . . Are you persuaded you see more clearly than I? It is not unlikely that you do. . . . Point me out a better way than I have yet known. Show me it is so, by plain proof of Scripture.'

In the Preface to the Notes he says:

'Concerning the Scriptures in general, it may be observed, the Word of the Living God, which directed the first patriarchs also, was, in the time of Moses, committed to writing. To this were added in several succeeding generations the inspired writings of the other prophets. Afterwards what the Son of God preached and the Holy Ghost spake by the Apostles, the Apostles

[1] A man of one book.

and Evangelists wrote. This is what is now styled the Holy Scripture: This is that Word of God "which remaineth for ever"; of which, though "heaven and earth pass away, one jot or tittle shall not pass away." The Scripture therefore of the Old and New Testament is a most solid and precious system of divine truth. Every part thereof is worthy of God; and all together are one entire body, in which is no defect, no excess. It is the fountain of heavenly wisdom, which they who are able to taste, prefer to all writings of men, however wise, or learned, or holy. . . . An exact knowledge of the truth was accompanied, in the inspired writers, with an exactly regular series of arguments, a precise expression of their meaning, and a genuine vigour of suitable affections. . . . In the language of the sacred writings we may observe the utmost depth, together with the utmost ease. All the elegancies of human compositions sink into nothing before it: God speaks not as man but as God. His thoughts are very deep; and thence His words are of inexhaustible virtue. And the language of His messengers also is exact in the highest degree: for the words that were given them exactly answered the impression made upon their minds.'

From the Sermons themselves, and from the Notes, a very considerable selection of passages might be made, in all of which there is the same unfaltering emphasis upon the Authority of the Bible. Only for a few of these have I any space in these pages. From the Sermons I take two brief passages—the first from the Sermon upon 'The Witness of our own Spirit,' p. 136 in Volume V of his *Works*: the second from the Sermon upon 'The Means of Grace,' p. 193 of the same volume. In the first passage, Wesley has been stating that the rule of the heathen, as the Apostle teaches elsewhere, is the law written on their hearts, and he then proceeds:

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'But the Christian rule of right and wrong is the Word of God; the writings of the Old and New Testament; all that the prophets and "holy men of old" wrote "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"; all that Scripture which was given by inspiration of God, and which is indeed profitable for teaching the whole will of God; for reproof of what is contrary thereto; for correction of error; and for instruction, or training up, in righteousness.

'This is a lantern unto a Christian's feet, and a light in all his paths. This alone he receives as his rule of right and wrong, of whatever is really good or evil. He esteems nothing good, but what is here enjoined, either directly or by plain consequence; he accounts nothing evil but what is here forbidden, either in terms or by undeniable inference. Whatever the Scripture neither forbids nor enjoins, either directly or by plain consequence, he believes to be of an indifferent nature; to be in itself neither good nor evil; this being the whole and sole outward rule whereby his conscience is to be directed in all things.'

Every one will admit that such a passage as the foregoing could only have been written by one who held the Bible to be a Perfect Whole, informed in all its parts, both in what it contains and what it omits, by divine wisdom. The passage which follows contains an emphatic denial of the existence of error in the Bible:

'And that this (viz. searching the Scriptures) is a means whereby God not only gives but confirms and increases true wisdom, we learn from the words of St. Paul to Timothy: "From a child thou hast known the sacred Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." The same truth (viz. that this is the great means God has ordained for conveying His manifold grace to man) is delivered, in the fullest manner that can be conceived, in the words which immediately follow: "All

Scripture is given by inspiration of God"; consequently *all Scripture is infallibly true*; "and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," to the end "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."' (The italics are mine.)

From the Notes also I select three or four brief passages, giving first the Scripture words, and then Wesley's comment:

John x. 35: 'And the Scripture cannot be broken'—that is, nothing which is written therein can be censured or rejected.

Gal. iii. 8: 'And the Scripture'—that is, the Holy Ghost who gave the Scripture. 'Foreseeing that God would justify, etc.' So great is the excellency and fullness of the Scriptures, that all the things that can ever be controverted are therein both foreseen and determined.

2 Cor. iv. 2: 'Nor privily corrupting the (pure) Word of God'—by any additions or alterations, or by attempting to accommodate it to the taste of the hearers.

1 Tim. i. 3: 'Charge some to teach no other doctrine'—than I have taught. Let them put nothing in place of it, add nothing to it.

1 John iv. 1: 'Believe not every spirit'—whereby any teacher is actuated. 'But try the spirits'—by the rule which follows. We are to try all spirits by the written word: 'To the Law and to the Testimony.' If any man speaks not according to these, the spirit which actuates him is not of God.

It would be very difficult to make any greater claim for the Scriptures than Wesley thus makes. He declares that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule of our faith, the whole and sole outward rule by which our conscience is to be directed in all things: that they form a system of divine truth, every part of which is

worthy of God: that they are given by inspiration of God, and therefore are infallibly true: that in them there is no excess, no defect: that the writers thereof had exact knowledge of the truth, precision of expression, and exact regularity of argument: that they have the utmost depth because God speaks not as man but as God: that they are so full and excellent that all the things which can ever be controverted are therein both foreseen and determined: that all teachers must be tried by Scripture to see if they speak from God: that if Scripture support a doctrine it will stand; but if not, the sooner it falls the better: that nothing must be altered in the Scriptures, nor added to them, nor taken from them, nor replaced by anything from outside: and that not one jot or one tittle shall ever pass away from this Word of God, which abides unchanged for ever.

The Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Methodists!

III

MAN'S ORIGIN AND FIRST ESTATE

Man's Origin, early Condition, and disastrous Fall, are foundation truths of the Bible, and in many ways profoundly influence the whole teaching of the inspired volume. Early Methodists put them in their right place, being free from the strange obsession of some modern Methodists—that a building can stand when the foundations have utterly fallen away.

It is the Darwinian theory of Evolution which has so largely undermined the faith of the modern Churches, and has led them to prefer man's theory to God's revelation. Though they know well, if they know anything, that man's opinions and scientific theories change with almost every generation; that scientists are yet on the lower slope of the hill of knowledge, and with many a perilous slip-back are slowly climbing upward; that the greatest minds of days gone by held as truth what now seems to us but childish fancy; yet they say 'we choose man's shifting theories, and reject God's changeless Word.' The irony of the situation is found here—that our 'advanced thinkers' are living scientifically in the last generation. Haeckel, the Darwinian evolutionist, whose attacks upon the Christian faith have been so vast a factor in the atheism of modern Germany, confessed that he was left practically alone among the

thinkers of Germany in his acceptance of Darwinism. Virchow, perhaps the greatest scientist of modern Germany, said bitingly that Darwinism was at its height just when the *Origin of Species* was published and had been declining ever since. Dr. Etheridge, one of our own scientists, declared that there is not a single item in the Natural History Museum which supports Darwinism, a theory which is based on fancies that have no relation to facts: while Sir Oliver Lodge, in his address to the British Association, declared that we now know that the gradual ascent from species to species which Darwin imagined does not exist at all, but all evolution is *per saltum*, i.e., it goes in leaps. New species do not gradually evolve: they suddenly appear. It is a calamity of the first magnitude for the Christian faith that many of her 'leaders,' in their ignorance, so committed themselves to Darwinism that they now feel it impossible to go back. It would involve revolutionizing their theology once again, burning their books, and ruining their reputations. So they still authoritatively declare that science's ill-cut and now cast-off clothing is the most fitting attire for the Christian Faith!

Who knows what is now happening in the laboratory or the study?—what new plots against revelation the Father of Lies is concocting; in what new intricacies of error professors of theology are becoming involved. Perhaps the theory is now being moulded which in 1925 will be flung out upon us, and lead many more astray. Meantime, and always, let us hold to the Truth that changes not.

Man was created in the image of God. God beheld him, and He saw that he was 'very good.' He began his life at peace with God. His soul was alive to God: for the penalty of his disobedience was that his soul died thereby: 'in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' So 'by one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin': and the great aim of the divine work of redemption is that man 'should be renewed in the image of Him that created him.'

So our Standards teach fully and clearly: and I now proceed to quote a few out of the many passages in the Standard Sermons. In Volume V of his *Works*, Sermon 5, Wesley says:

'In the image of God was man made, holy as He that created him is holy; merciful as the Author of all is merciful; perfect as his Father in heaven is perfect. As God is love, so man dwelling in love, dwelt in God and God in him. God made him to be "an image of His own eternity," an incorruptible picture of the God of glory. He was accordingly pure, as God is pure, from every spot of sin. He knew not evil in any kind or degree, but was inwardly and outwardly sinless and undefiled. He "loved the Lord his God, with all his heart and with all his soul and mind and strength."'

Or again in Volume VI, Sermon 36, speaking of man's spiritual state before the Fall, Wesley says:

'On the other hand, it is absolutely certain, faith, in its particular sense, had then no place. For in that sense it necessarily supposes sin, and the wrath of God declared against the sinner; without which there is no need of an atonement for sin, in order to the sinner's reconciliation with God. Consequently, as there was no need of an Atonement before the Fall, so there was

no place for faith in that Atonement; man being then pure from every stain of sin, holy as God is holy. But love even then filled his heart; it reigned in him without a rival; and it was only when love was lost by sin that faith was added, not for its own sake, nor with any design that it should exist any longer than until it had answered the end for which it was ordained—namely, to restore man to the love from which he was fallen. At the Fall, therefore, was added this evidence of things unseen, which before was utterly needless.'

Or yet again, in Volume VI, Sermon 45, on 'The New Birth,' Wesley gives a long statement of the basis of the doctrine of the New Birth. I will not quote the whole long passage, comprising Section I, and the paragraphs numbered 1, 2, 3, 4. But suffice it to say that Wesley finds the basis of the doctrine of the New Birth in the facts that man was created in God's image, 'pure from sin, and filled with righteousness and true holiness'; that 'man did not abide in honour: he fell from his high estate,' 'he lost the life of God: he was separated from Him in union with whom his spiritual life consisted,' and 'this separation from God he sustained in the day, the hour, he ate of the forbidden fruit.'

There is no need to quote anything further in order to show that our Standards teach plainly and insistently that man was created in a state of spiritual life and holiness—a doctrine utterly contradicted by those among us who, while they profess adherence to our Standards, have actually made the basis of their doctrine of man the Darwinian theory that man emerged, by long-drawn-out and minute stages, from the brute beast, and has not even yet worked out of his being that vast

inheritance of sin with which his existence began. It is clear also that the rejection of the Biblical account of man's origin and first estate involves the rejection of the doctrine of the Fall. Rationalists see this clearly. Therefore they twist and turn about, discover that the Fall was the first great stage in man's upward progress, and save their face and presumably silence their conscience by averring that this little change in their view of the 'fall' does not make any difference. Wesley's teaching upon the Fall is the next of the messages which made the Revival.

IV

THE FALL OF MAN

To the Darwinian theologian the Bible must needs be a great perplexity. The Bible says man was created in the image of God: Darwinism says man is still painfully emerging out of the beast. The Bible says man lost his first and high estate: Darwinism says that man has always been steadily getting better. The Bible says man was ruined by the entrance of sin: Darwinism says that what we call sin was always there, an unavoidable stage in man's development. The Bible says man can be set free from sin, here and now, through the Atonement which is in Christ Jesus: Darwinism says man only gets rid of sin by his long slow upward progress, and will not be rid of it until ages have passed on—while the individual of to-day is without hope. It is indeed a superhuman task to reconcile such contradictions; and those who essayed it must have been animated either by a very profound hope or else by a very profound fear that Darwinism was true.

It is easy to see how to the man who timidly feared the Bible was false, and much more to the man who wickedly hoped the Bible was false, the 'higher critic' appeared as a kind of Saviour. He offered to show so plainly that the Bible is only a human book, not half as carefully written as the *Origin of Species*. Its science, the guesses of an

unscientific age: its history, written by poets and prophets and literary men free from the nice conscientious sense of the twentieth century: the Old Testament, a terrible jumble of history and legend and fiction and forecasts, arranged in an utterly misleading manner, and with a chronology of an almost bedlam character: the New Testament, 'the literary remains of the first Christian century.' All this helps the Darwinian theologian to say that the Bible does not matter. Thus: 'Well, as to the Fall, you must distinguish between Man and Men. I believe in the Fall of Men, but not in the Fall of Man. Men are continually falling; Man is continually rising. Individuals fall, and fall grievously; the race is always ascending and advancing. Man is not a fallen but a risen and still rising creature.'[1] Or again, of the story of Genesis, 'a story so painfully grotesque,' 'It shows us that the history of man has been an upward movement all along, that suffering and sin itself have been overruled for highest good. It teaches that what we call the Fall of Man was really a most important step in the path of progress.'[2] Or again: 'Paul founds a momentous argument on the story of the Fall in Genesis. For him, of course, Adam and Eve were absolutely historical, and their biography as reliable as anything his friend Luke may be writing at the time. But what would happen to Paul's argument if the first eleven chapters of Genesis were to be regarded as allegory rather than fact, inherited sagas on which the religious genius of Israel's prophets

[1] Rev. S. T. Bosward, *Man, the Glory of God*, p. 16.
[2] Ibid, p. 25.

indelibly stamped the great foundation truths of the national faith? . . . The Fall might then be referred to as the period in the evolution of mankind when men first felt the dawning sense of right and wrong differentiating them from the animal kingdom, through which in his physical and mental constitution man had slowly and wonderfully ascended.'[3] The theological professor does not differ from the circuit minister in the substance of his statements, but only in his form of speech, and both of them enable us to see that Darwinism and 'higher criticism' are natural allies against biblical theology, just as priestcraft is the natural ally of autocracy in stamping out human liberty.

Not such as these were the teachings given in the days of the Great Revival. Scripture and Scripture only was the basis of their belief. They held the Scriptures to be given by inspiration of God, and to all gainsayers answered: 'Let God be true and every man a liar.' For ourselves, in this past generation we have to look back upon a dark period in which an unproved theory usurped the authority of the Word of God. That theory, the Darwinian theory of evolution, overlooked such multitudes of facts, and is now so widely rejected, that the path has been smoothed for a penitent Church to return to the Bible as a little child. We may be able now to listen with a more willing and obedient heart while John Wesley states the teaching of the Scriptures.

Thus in Sermon 5, p. 54, in Volume V of his *Works*, he writes:

[3] Rev. Dr. J. H. Moulton, in *The Chief Corner-Stone*, p. 135.

'Such then was the state of man in Paradise. By the free unmerited love of God, he was holy and happy: he knew, loved, enjoyed God, which is, in substance, life everlasting. And in this life of love he was to continue for ever if he continued to obey God in all things; but if he disobeyed Him in any, he was to forfeit all. "In that day," said God, "Thou shalt surely die."'

'Man did disobey God. He "ate of the tree of which God commanded him, Thou shalt not eat of it," and in that day he was condemned by the righteous judgement of God. Then also the sentence whereof he was warned before began to take place upon him. For the moment he tasted that fruit, he died. His soul died, was separated from God: separated from whom the soul has no more life than the body has when separate from the soul. His body likewise became corruptible and mortal; so that death then took hold on that also. And being already dead in spirit, dead to God, dead in sin, he hastened on to death everlasting; to the destruction both of body and of soul, in the fire never to be quenched.'

The same plain and unequivocal teaching occurs again and again throughout the Sermons; for man's original uprightness, his corruption by the Fall, and the ensuing change in his relationship with God, form the foundation of the Christian system. As Wesley expounds the messages of salvation, the Fall of necessity receives notice again and again. Thus in Sermon 6, *Works*, V, p. 71, he argues the folly of seeking Salvation by Works, on the ground of the vast difference made by the Fall:

'The folly of those who still trust in the "righteousness which is of the law," the terms of which are "do this and live," may abundantly appear from hence: they set out wrong: their very first step is a funda-

mental mistake. For, before they can ever think of obtaining any blessing on the terms of this covenant, they must suppose themselves to be in his state with whom the covenant was made. But how vain a supposition is this; since it was made with Adam in a state of innocence! How weak, therefore, must that whole building be which stands on such a foundation! And how foolish are they who thus build on the sand! who seem never to have considered that the covenant of works was not given to man when he was "dead in trespasses and sins," but when he was alive unto God, when he knew no sin, but was holy as God is holy: who forget that it was never designed for the recovery of the life and favour of God once lost, but only for the continuance and increase thereof, till it should be complete in life everlasting.'

Nor, of course, were there lacking those in Wesley's day who denied the truth of the Fall: some of whom evidently denied it in such wise that they denied also the possibility of holiness. If Man is, by God's own Creation, and apart from the Fall, a corrupt and sinful creature, we could not reasonably look for holiness. We might rather expect to abide in the sinful state in which God created us. On very similar grounds the Darwinian evolutionist cannot expect a true cure for our soul's disease, but only a very gradual improvement, with no hope of full deliverance. Wesley saw clearly that the denial of the Fall involves also the denial of Sanctification. So I close with one more quotation: this time from Sermon 44, *Works*, VI, p. 64 (refuting some who deny that Man is fallen):

'But ye have not so learned the oracles of God. Ye know that He who seeth what is in Man gives a far different account both of nature and of grace, of our fall and our recovery. Ye know that the great end of

religion is to renew our heart in the image of God, to repair that total loss of righteousness and true holiness which was sustained by the sin of our first parent. Ye know that all religion which does not answer this end, all that stops short of this, the renewal of our soul in the image of God, after the likeness of Him that created it, is no more than a farce, and a mere mockery of God to the destruction of our own soul. O beware of all those teachers of lies who would palm this upon you for Christianity! Regard them not, although they should come unto you with all the deceivableness of unrighteousness; with all smoothness of language, all decency, yea, beauty and elegance of expression, all professions of earnest good-will to you and reverence for the Holy Scriptures. Keep to the plain old faith, "once delivered to the saints," and delivered by the Spirit of God to our hearts. Know your disease! Know your cure! Ye were born in sin: therefore, "ye must be born again," born of God. By nature ye are wholly corrupted: by grace ye shall be wholly renewed. In Adam ye all died: in the second Adam, in Christ, ye are all made alive. "You that were dead in sins, hath He quickened." He hath already given you a principle of life, even faith in Him who loved you and gave Himself for you! Now, "go on from faith to faith" until your whole sickness be healed; and all "that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."'

V

THE TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF HUMAN NATURE

There are a few doctrines of the Faith which are specially unwelcome to the 'new theologian' of our time. The Fall, Blood-Atonement, and Eternal Punishment are among those doctrines: and not least also the truth of the Total Depravity of human nature. Yet these are the very doctrines which we must number among 'the eternal springs of revival,'[1] and not least among them the one last-named. To make light of sin is to make light of salvation: and nothing is more certain to dry up the springs of revival than to make light of the dread fact of inbred sin. In the present chapter my aim is to make quite clear the teaching to which Wesleyan Methodism is pledged, and to indicate its perfect reasonableness and truth.

Let me then, first, quote one of the numerous assertions of man's entire depravity which crowd our Standards; and then, ere quoting more, outline what is and what is not included in the doctrine so taught.

The passage I select is from Sermon 5, Vol. V, p. 73:

'Now whatever considerations prove the folly of trusting in the righteousness which is of the Law, prove equally the wisdom of submitting to the righteous-

[1] The title of a searching book by Rev. John Findlater.

ness which is of God by faith. . . . For what is it more than to acknowledge with our heart as well as our lip, the true state wherein we are? to acknowledge that we bring with us into the world a corrupt sinful nature, more sinful indeed than we can easily conceive or find words to express? that thereby we are prone to all that is evil and averse from all that is good? that we are full of pride, self-will, unruly passions, evil desires, vile and inordinate affections; lovers of pleasure, lovers of the world, more than of God? '

Such passages abound in the Sermons, and were evidently most prominent in the preaching which produced the glorious Evangelical Revival. Yet to many Christians, even loyal ones, this doctrine presents great difficulties: and believing that these difficulties arise from lack of clear understanding, and that the doctrine is absolutely reasonable as well as Scriptural, I want to make clear what this doctrine fundamentally means.

The Fundamental Meaning of the Doctrine is that whatever good there may be in a human being, that good does not proceed from within himself. To grasp this is practically to solve the difficulties of the doctrine. The true explanation does not credit human nature with any of that goodness.

First, then, let us note two things which the doctrine does not do. One of these things is that the doctrine of Total Depravity does not, of course, refer to the Regenerate. From their renewed nature much that is good proceeds.

The second thing is that the doctrine of Total Depravity does not deny that there is much that is good in the ordinary unregenerate man. What it does deny is that this good proceeds from his own heart. To deny, for example, the patriotic motives

with which many thousands of unregenerate men and women volunteered for the Great War, is not involved in this doctrine. It would be quite impossible to deny the moral enthusiasm which animated multitudes who made no claim whatever to a regenerate nature and gave no indication of any Christian life. Nor would it be possible to deny the orderly and kindly outlook upon life which makes it habitual for the average Englishman to respect lawful authority and to do a good turn to his fellow when the chance comes his way. Run through the whole gamut of good thoughts and deeds which are found in the life of the unregenerate ordinary man or woman. The real question is: *What is their source?*

In the second place, the doctrine must give an answer to that question. The answer is that the good in the natural man is either of the Prevenient Grace of the Holy Spirit, or it is in some other way from outside himself. It is an invasion of outside influences. For the human heart is very open indeed to influences from outside itself, and is essentially imitative in its character.

How shall we conceive of the human heart? Suppose we picture it as a territory—a territory very open to invasion, and as a matter of fact actually invaded. Let us take a parallel. Suppose a band of missionaries go into a heathen land, very dark, very hostile, and yet open to their entry. Their influence is quickly felt. Is there any good in that land? Certainly there is: there is the influence of the missionaries. It would be impossible to deny it, and equally impossible to credit it to the land. It is an invasion from outside. It did not spring

out of the life of the land itself. So also with the territory of the human heart. Very many good things may and do invade it from outside: but its own life is evil.

The Scripture ideal is that we human beings should be 'a people for God's own possession.' The only good attitude is joyful submission to the will of God. That we should be 'a people for our own possession,' and that Self-Will should rule us, is the evil of human nature in one of its universal forms. Now in this territory of human nature there is a central seat of government, and in that central seat Self-Will is enthroned. But it is an extensive territory, open to invasion and actually being invaded at almost all points. The writ of King Self-Will does not run everywhere. There are influences in various directions which oppose his will. For example, a man is self-willed and self-indulgent in almost everything: but he is an artist, and in the realm of Art he has come under the influence of one of the masters of that Art, and his self-will just there is swept aside. All sorts of outside influences, some of them very good, invade the territory of the human heart; but Total Depravity deals with the King, not with the enemies who invade his realm. Total Depravity says that the only Ruler is Self-Will.

Or the soul may be likened to a deep well, and in the depth there is a spring. That spring is poisonous. All the water which wells up from the depth is poisoned water. But there is other water in the well. There are streams and runlets which flow into it from outside. As they come into contact with the poisoned water they are themselves in

danger of defilement. Nevertheless, you may be able to find almost pure water in the well—only it has not come *out of* the well. It came into it from outside, not out of it from within. Total Depravity is the doctrine of the spring and of the water which flows out of the well itself. It says there is nothing but poisoned water flowing out of its own depths. It is the doctrine of the man himself, the ultimate man.

So there may be much good in a man, good that dwells in him but did not arise from within him. What are some of these invading influences?

First of all I would put the Prevenient Grace of the Holy Spirit. This Grace is described in the next chapter. It is the Holy Spirit who gives light amid the darkness, and prompts to obedience and goodness. Many a movement within the soul is the work of the Holy Spirit. But He is a force from outside: an influence alien to the unregenerate heart.

Secondly, I would mention Civilization. The unregenerate man did not make it. It was made chiefly by the Christian Faith. He was simply born within it. But its check upon self-will is mighty: and just as the little fish, called the Smooth Blenny, grows yellow in a yellow bucket, so a man takes an outward hue in keeping with the civilization into which he is born. The famous story of Jimmy Button is a good illustration of this. Jimmy was bought from his Patagonian friends for a pearl button, and taken away to England. There he was trained, and became a very promising young man amid the influences of English civilization. Then, years after his purchase, he was taken to visit his

old friends. Suddenly Jimmy disappeared; and when discovered again, he had shed all his veneer of Christian civilization as a snake sheds his skin, and was living again in great contentment in the savage Patagonian way. The civilization amid which we live makes a mighty difference to the appearance, and even to the reality of the *surface* of things, of the outer layers of the heart.

Then again, I should mention Statute Law, one of the mightiest influences which invade the realm of Self-Will.

> On the other side of Suez,
> Where there *are* no Ten Commandments,

is a quip that has immense significance. If the Statute-Book were abrogated there are many who would outwardly change out of all recognition.

So also with Home and Religious Training, and with everything which goes to make up what is spoken of as 'atmosphere.' It used to be a common and rather grim jest with respect to certain emigrants that they left their religion behind them when they left England and took it up again when they returned from Africa. From home and church many influences invade the realm of self-will. They are often very blessed influences. They defy the king of the realm. They sometimes meet and put to flight his armies. They make a mighty appeal to the soul to turn to the God who changes the depths and gives a new heart and a new spirit. But all these influences are external to the man himself: they do not rise from within him, and they cannot modify our estimate of the utter corruption of the unregenerate soul.

Thus the Bible, regarding man as he is in himself, a partaker of the ultimate moral stock of humanity, describes him as at enmity with God, desperately wicked or sick, dead in trespasses and sins, and by nature a child of wrath. The Bible judges not by surface appearances but by the real deep heart. That remains the same in all ages. Human nature has not changed. Apparent changes are due to comparatively superficial influences of changed civilization, law, and training. Thus, to-day the Englishman has generous ideals of human freedom. 'Slaves cannot breathe in England.' Does that then mean that his heart is good? Not at all: it is just the light of our Christian civilization reflected upon him. Had he lived in Rome two thousand years ago the very same man would have reflected Roman civilization and have shared the belief in slavery. But the light reflected on the surface does not change the self-will enthroned at the centre. Upon the surface modes of thought and action Atmosphere, mental and moral Atmosphere, tells and tells tremendously—and well is it for humanity that this is so. The world is vastly brighter that there are in it so many 'houses with golden windows,' although those windows have not a grain of gold in them and only shine in a reflected light.

With such thoughts as these in our minds we shall not find Wesley's tremendous statements on Total Depravity difficult of acceptance. But easy or difficult, such is the teaching of God's own Inspired Word. It is the searchlight of Scripture cast into the black depths of the human soul. I therefore close with one other, somewhat longer,

statement of the doctrine. The Sermons have many such statements, for this is one of the fundamental messages, the 'eternal springs' of revival: one of the best known of these statements being given in the chapter upon 'Repentance,' beginning: 'And first, Repent: that is, know yourselves.' This is one of the five themes upon which Wesley's great co-adjutor in the work of the Revival, George Whitefield, continually preached. In the passage given below Wesley refers to the account the heathen give of the evil in human nature, distinguishing it emphatically from the true account which the Christian religion gives. It is worthy of note that the heathen account is almost verbally identical with some of the accounts which are heard on human lips to-day. It is also worthy of note that he distinguishes the 'particular vices which reign in particular persons' from the evil which is general and reigns in all mankind alike. The passage is taken from the Sermon on Original Sin, p. 63 of Vol. VI:

'They (the heathen) knew not that all men were empty of all good and filled with all manner of evil. They were wholly ignorant of the entire depravation of the whole human nature of every man born into the world, in every faculty of his soul, not so much by those particular vices which reign in particular persons, as by the general flood of atheism and idolatry, of pride, self-will, and love of the world. This therefore is the first grand distinguishing point between Heathenism and Christianity. The one acknowledges that many men are infected with many vices, and even born with a proneness to them; but supposes withal that in some the natural good much overbalances the evil: the other declares that all men are conceived in sin and shapen in wickedness, that hence there is in every man a carnal

mind which is enmity against God, which is not, cannot be, subject to His law, and which so infects the whole soul that there dwelleth in him no good thing, but every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is evil, only evil, and that continually.

'Hence we may, secondly, learn that all who deny this, call it original sin or by any other title, are but heathens still, in the fundamental point which differences Heathenism from Christianity. They may indeed allow that men have many vices; that some are born with us, and that consequently we are not born altogether so wise and so virtuous as we should be; there being few that will roundly affirm that "we are born with as much propensity to good as to evil, and that every man is by nature as virtuous and wise as Adam was at his creation." But here is the *Shibboleth:* Is man by nature filled with all manner of evil? Is he void of all good? Is he wholly fallen? Is his soul totally corrupted? To come back to the text, is "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart only evil continually"? Allow this, and you are so far a Christian. Deny it, and you are but a heathen still.'

VI

UNIVERSAL REDEMPTION AND PREVENIENT GRACE

In the last chapter I have stated the doctrine of Total Depravity in its simplicity, in its blunt assertion of the utter evil of the natural heart of man. The ultimate moral stock of humanity is tainted through and through. That human nature which all men share, the block of which each individual is a chip, is characterized not by godliness and virtue but by 'atheism and idolatry, pride, self-will, and love of the world.' At the very heart of humanity, colouring our character through and through, is rebellion against God's law, taking the form of self-will; what some one has called 'anarchy against God.' The Fall of Man was total, so that the verse of the very popular hymn expresses the truth of the Bible and of human nature:

> And every virtue we possess,
> And every victory won,
> And every thought of holiness,
> Are His alone.

But we do not often see men acting under the impulse of unrelieved human nature. For example, the civilization which has been largely created by the Christian Faith sheds its influence over all people in Great Britain; the Statute-Book is most salutary; 'custom lies upon us with a weight heavy as lead and deep almost as life,' and is largely an

influence for good; the mental atmosphere of our country is largely permeated by Christian ideas; home influence and church influence count in most cases for a good deal and in all cases for something —whilst all these things are clearly not part of our moral nature but influences upon us from outside. The unregenerate man has many influences resting upon him which outwardly counteract his own depravity, so that in the providence of God our life upon earth becomes a tolerable life, whereas unrelieved human nature would make it a hell.

But the greatest of all influences restraining man from following his own depraved, unregenerate nature is probably the Prevenient Grace of God. God has never left the soul of man to the unrelieved influence of evil, but His gracious Spirit acts upon the unregenerate heart. Though we are born into a race fallen, we are born also into a race redeemed. Christ died for all; and hence comes many an influence aiming at our salvation. To these influences of the Divine Spirit even unregenerate men at times more or less fully yield. The Holy Spirit, not yet accepted but seeking for acceptance, is at work upon the unregenerate heart, convicting of evil, prompting to goodness, restraining sin, and setting forth Christ as victorious.

It would seem perhaps that there is hardly any need to quote from Wesleyan Standards any passages asserting the universality of redemption. Naturally there are many comments of that nature scattered through the Notes on the New Testament. Thus on 1 Tim. iv. 10, 'Who is the Saviour of all men,' Wesley's comment is: 'Preserving them in this life, and willing to save them eternally.'

Naturally there are very strong statements concerning the reality of the universal invitation to mankind to accept salvation, in those parts of Wesley's writings which deal with the Calvinistic controversy. But great part as that played in his life, he did not apparently think it needful to give the refutation of Calvinism any place in the Standard Sermons. In the Notes he gives the true interpretation of the doctrine of Election, and traces of the controversy sometimes appear. Thus in his comment on 1 Tim. ii. 4, 'Who willeth all men to be saved,' Wesley says: 'Who willeth, *seriously*, all men—not a part only, much less the smallest part.'

But that Redemption is offered to all and provided for all is the continual assumption of the Standards throughout, though the statements of it chiefly occur in connexion with the doctrine of salvation by faith. Thus at the close of Sermon 6, on 'The Righteousness of Faith,' he cries out:

> 'Whosoever thou art, O man, who hast the sentence of death in thyself, who feelest thyself a condemned sinner, and hast the wrath of God abiding on thee: Unto thee saith the Lord, not "Do this"—perfectly obey all My commandments—"and live"; but, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "The word of faith is nigh unto thee." Now, at this instant, in the present moment and in thy present state, sinner as thou art, just as thou art, believe the gospel; and "I will be merciful unto *thy* unrighteousness, and *thy* inquities I will remember no more."'

(See also close of Sermon 6, and Sermon 30.)

Closely associated with God's universal offer of salvation is the gracious light and influence of the

Divine Spirit, that 'prevenient grace' by which He strives to bring all hearts to life and peace. Upon most men at some time or another the Spirit brings mighty influences to bear, influences sometimes of a very lasting character, such as some Providence or some Scripture strongly applied to the heart. Upon this Wesley dwells in his ninth Sermon. But I would especially emphasize that 'preventing grace' which is universal and never fails to visit any except those who are utterly hardened. The best statement of this is given in Sermon 85, and though it is not in the Standards I shall quote it. It will light up the briefer statements found in the Standards themselves:

'Yet this is no excuse for those who continue in sin and lay the blame upon their Maker by saying, "It is God only who must quicken us, for we cannot quicken our own souls." For allowing that all the souls of men are dead in sin by *nature*, this excuses none, seeing that there is no man who is in a state of mere nature; there is no man unless he has quenched the Spirit that is wholly void of the grace of God. No man living is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called *natural conscience*. But this is not natural; it is more properly termed *preventing grace*. Every man has a greater or less measure of this, which waiteth not for the call of man. Every one has, sooner or later, good desires; although the generality of men stifle them before they can strike deep root, or produce any considerable fruit. Every one has some measure of that light, some faint glimmering ray, which sooner or later, more or less, enlightens every man that cometh into the world. And every one, unless he be one of the small number whose conscience is seared as with a hot iron, feels more or less uneasy when he acts contrary to the light of his own conscience. So that no man sins because he has not grace, but because he does not use the grace which he hath.'

There are three things included by Wesley within 'preventing grace,' and mentioned in the Standards. The first is *Conscience*.

In his comment on John i. 9: 'The true Light who lighteth every man that cometh into the world,' he says: 'Who lighteth every man—by what is vulgarly called natural conscience, pointing out at least the general lines of good and evil. And this light, if man did not hinder, would shine more and more to the perfect day.'

Or again: Rom. ii. 14: 'When the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature the things of the law': his comment is: 'Do by nature, that is, without an outward rule; though this also strictly speaking is by preventing grace . . . what the law is to the Jews, they are, by the grace of God, to themselves.'

The second is *Conviction of Sin* (compare his Notes upon John xvi. 8-11). Upon this he says in Sermon 9, Vol. V, p. 109:

'Perhaps one reason why so many think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, why they do not discern what state they are in, is because these several states of soul are often mingled together, and in some measure meet in one and the same person. Thus experience shows that the legal state, or state of fear, is frequently mixed with the natural; for few men are so fast asleep in sin, but they are sometimes more or less awakened. As the Spirit of God does not "wait for the call of man," so at some times He *will* be heard. He puts them in fear, so as for a season at least the Heathen "know themselves to be but men." They feel the burden of sin, and earnestly desire to flee from the wrath to come. But not long: they seldom suffer the arrows of conviction to go deep into their souls; but quickly stifle the grace of God, and return to their wallowing in the mire.'

Westcott's note upon this great prevenient work of the Holy Spirit is very worthy of attention. He

says: 'The idea of "conviction" is complex. It involves the conceptions of authoritative examination, of unquestionable proof, of decisive judgement, of punitive power. Whatever the final issue may be, he who "convicts" another places the truth of the case in a clear light before him, so that it must be seen and acknowledged as truth. He who then rejects the conclusion which this exposition involves, rejects it with his eyes open and at his peril. Truth seen as truth carries with it condemnation to all who refuse to welcome it. The different aspects of this conviction are brought out in the usage of the word in the New Testament. There is first the thorough testing of the real nature of the facts (c. iii. 20; Eph. v. 13); and then the application of the truth thus ascertained to the particular person affected (James ii. 9; Jude 15 (22); 1 Cor. xiv. 24; 2 Tim. iv. 2; cf. Matt. xviii. 15; John viii. 9); and that in chastisement (1 Tim. v. 20; Titus i. 9, ii. 15; cf. Eph. v. 11); or with a distinct view to the restoration of him who is in the wrong (Rev. iii. 19; Heb. xii. 5; Titus i. 13).'

The third aspect of 'preventing grace' is found in the occasional influences and promptings of the Holy Spirit. In Sermon 47 he refers to what are generally called the 'drawings of the Father': and in Sermon 44, on 'Original Sin,' there is the frank recognition that occasional promptings of the Divine Spirit may lead the soul into courses contrary to its own nature. I quote the latter. Vol. VI, p. 57:

'But was there not good mingled with the evil (i.e. of man's heart)? Was there not light intermixed with the darkness? No; none at all: "God saw that the

whole imagination of the heart of man was only evil." *It cannot indeed be denied that very many of them, perhaps all, had good motions put into their hearts* : for the " Spirit of God did then also strive with man," if haply he might repent, more especially during that gracious reprieve, the one hundred and twenty years while the ark was preparing. But still " in his flesh dwelt no good thing "; all his nature was purely evil; it was wholly consistent with itself, and unmixed with anything of an opposite nature. (The italics are mine.)

' However, it may still be matter of inquiry, Was there no intermission of this evil? Were there no lucid intervals wherein something good might be found in the heart of man? We are not here to consider what the grace of God might occasionally work in his soul; and abstracted from this we have no reason to believe there was any intermission of that evil. . . . He never deviated into good.'

It is thus that the Methodist theology, while affirming the entire corruption of human nature, accounts for the seeming goodness which has deceived so many. The human heart is desperately sick, though sometimes it simulates health. The prophetic word is true: ' The heart is deceitful above all things.'

VII

ATONEMENT THROUGH THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

The Atonement is the central doctrine of the Christian Faith, and in the present position of affairs cannot fail to be widely questioned. The whole most blessed truth of Atonement is manifestly beyond the reach of human reason, and when the authority of Scripture has been cast aside nothing is more inevitable than that attempts should be made to set the Apostle Paul in contrast with the divine Master whom he interprets. The attitude which has become very prevalent is that St. Paul smothered the simple teaching of the Master about divine love with barbaric ideas of blood-atonement.

Years ago Dr. Jenkins told how, after reading a very superior article by Matthew Arnold, in which that critic declared that a blood theology repelled the cultured mind of the nineteenth century, he went to hear Moody. A great congregation hung upon the preacher's lips; and there, in the gallery, was Matthew Arnold! And the subject which riveted the attention and moved the heart of those thousands, was Salvation through the Blood of Christ! It does not repel. It attracts! It saves!

But there is no contradiction whatever between the teaching of Christ and of His great interpreter St. Paul. 'This is My blood of the New Covenant,

which is shed for many for the remission of sins,' has blood-atonement in it as clearly as anything in the writings of St. Paul. What is specially significant and dangerous to-day, however, is this—that many are labouring to use the language of the Bible about the Cross while expressly refusing to accept the essential New Testament teaching: viz., that the death of Christ was a vicarious sacrifice, in which He offered Himself up for us; that His death breaks down the barrier between mankind and God; that our forgiveness is on account of His death; that He washed us from our sins in His blood; and that we are saved from wrath through Him.

For example, here before me is a book which devotes nearly twenty-seven pages to the Atonement.[1] It seldom quotes the Scriptures, but it does quote 'Rock of Ages' and 'There is life for a look.' Any one who reads the chapters carelessly would think that here at all events is the true doctrine of the Atonement. Yet the writer scouts the idea of the wrath of God against sinners, his essential teaching being that the Cross is a 'symbol,' revealing to us something about the life of God which we should not have known otherwise, viz. the suffering of God. 'The power of the Cross is what it is,' he says, 'because we look at its first and primary symbolic truth, namely, that it is the mirror that reflects the suffering love of God.' That Christ bore the punishment of our sin is, he says, against reason and against science; yet he can find a way of speaking of the spilt blood of Christ, and can quote 'Rock of Ages.'

[1] *Jesus and the Other World: An Appeal to the Modern Man.*

The well-known 'broad-church' theory makes the Atonement simply a manifestation of God's love to man. The 'sympathy' theory of Bushnell is very similar—at all events in its disregard of the penal element in the Atonement of the Cross. These and other theories do not embody the substitutionary and penal ideas which are at the heart of the New Testament doctrine of Redemption. They are, however, too abstruse and vague to do the harm which is to-day being done by the view of Atonement popularized by 'New Theology,' and now brought into vogue by pictures as well as popular letterpress. This view is very simple, attaining simplicity by ignoring almost everything in the Bible teaching. 'Wherever you see the spirit of self-sacrifice, you see the true Atonement at work.' 'To escape from the dominion of selfishness is forthwith to become a power in the hand of God for the uplifting and ingathering of mankind to Himself; this is the Atonement.' The fisherman risks his own life to save the shipwrecked sailors on the rocky coast: 'There is the truth for you; the real Atonement.' The book[2] from which I quote is now 'withdrawn from circulation.' That, alas! means very little. Its *views* are circulating more freely than ever. This idea of Atonement is of course applied to the battlefield. For instance, one preacher says: 'In the presence of the dead soldier we are standing on holy ground.' Death in the cause of the Allies 'is but a modern re-enacting of the sacrifice of Christ Himself.'

And probably it would be claimed that all these

[2] Rev. R. J. Campbell's *New Theology*.

doctrines of Atonement treat the Cross as central, however much they reject its New Testament explanation. In so far as this is true they are to be preferred before the teaching of those who declare that 'the Cross is not the central teaching of the New Testament,' but that the central teaching is divine Fatherhood: and that we need a new gospel —'a reasonable gospel, the gospel of the Fatherhood of God.'[1] How thoroughly at variance with our Standards this is, let two extracts from the Standards show. In his comment upon Acts ii. 23, Wesley says:

'The Apostle here anticipates an objection. Why did God suffer such a person to be so treated? Did He not know what wicked men intended to do; and had He not power to prevent it? Yea, He knew all that those wicked men intended to do. And He had power to blast all their designs in a moment. But He did not exert that power because "He so loved the world"; because it was the determinate counsel of His love to redeem mankind from eternal death, by the death of His only begotten Son.'

Or again, he comments upon Rom. iii. 25:

'A propitiation—to appease an offended God. But if, as some teach, God never was offended, there was no need of this propitiation. And if so, Christ died in vain.'

Our Gospel is the gospel of salvation from sin and from the penalties of sin. That sin deserves punishment; that justice demands the punishment of sin; that Christ bore the punishment in our stead, and satisfied the claims of justice; that only at great personal cost did Christ thus purchase sal-

[1] Rev. Dr. Ballard.

vation for us—these are the features of the New Testament teaching which Wesley emphasizes again and again.

Wesley teaches that the wrath of God abides upon unpardoned humanity. Commenting upon Rom. v. 9, he says:

'We shall be saved from wrath through Him—that is, from the effects of the wrath of God. But is there then wrath in God? Is not wrath a human passion? and can this human passion be in God? We may answer this by another question: Is not love a human passion? and how can this human passion be in God? But to answer directly, wrath in man, and so love in man, is a human passion. But wrath in God is not a human passion; nor is love, as it is in God. Therefore the inspired writers ascribe both the one and the other to God only in an analogical sense.'

Again, in his comment on Eph. ii. 3:

'And were by nature—that is, in our natural state, Children of wrath—having the wrath of God abiding on us.'

Or again, 1 John ii. 2:

'The propitiation—the atoning sacrifice, by which the wrath of God is appeased.'

This wrath is due to sin; and justice demands the punishment of sin. This punishment was borne by Christ. A Wesleyan minister quotes with approval no less an authority upon Christian doctrine than Mr. Robert Blatchford, to the effect that it is against reason to say that Christ bore the punishment of our sins. But Wesley says in his comment upon Rom. iii. 25 and 26:

'To declare His righteousness—to demonstrate not only His clemency but His justice; even that vindictive

justice whose essential character and principal office is to punish sin. . . . For a demonstration of His righteousness—both of His justice and mercy. That He might be just—showing His justice on His own Son. And yet the merciful Justifier of every one that believeth in Jesus. Might evidence Himself to be strictly and inviolably righteous in the administration of His government, even while He is the merciful Justifier of the sinner that believeth in Jesus. The attribute of justice must be preserved inviolate; and inviolate it is preserved, if there was a real infliction of punishment on our Saviour.'

Again, upon 2 Cor. v. 21:

'For us . . . who must have been consumed by the divine justice had not this atonement been made for our sins.'

Or again, on John x. 11 and 18:

'I lay down My life—I cheerfully die to expiate the sins of men.'

'I have power to lay it down, etc.—I have an original power and right of Myself, both to lay it down as a ransom, and to take it again after full satisfaction is made for the sins of the whole world.'

This deliverance from sin is only and absolutely through the blood of Christ; who, by His blood-shedding, purchased redemption for us. Thus, writing on Heb. ix. 22, Wesley says:

'All this pointed to the blood of Christ effectually cleansing from all sin, and intimated, there can be no purification from it by any other means.'

Or again, upon John xix. 30:

'It is finished—My suffering; the purchase of man's redemption.'

And finally, this sin-bearing of our Lord's was definitely vicarious, substitutionary, in our room and stead. Thus in his comment upon Gal. iii. 13, Wesley says:

'Being made a curse for us—taking the curse upon Himself that we might be delivered from it, willingly submitting to that death which the law declares peculiarly accursed.'

Likewise, writing upon Rom. v. 6, he affirms:

'Christ died for the ungodly—not only to set them a pattern or to procure them power to follow it. It does not appear that this expression, of dying for anyone, has any other signification than that of rescuing the life of another by laying down our own.'

That is the doctrine of Atonement which every Wesleyan minister and local preacher declares he both believes and preaches. It was that teaching which brought life and peace to Wesley himself, and to multitudes no man can number of the heavy-laden children of men! 'He loved me! He gave Himself for me! and I, even I, am a child of God!'

'Unto Him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in His blood . . . to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever.'

VIII

REPENTANCE AND THE PREACHING OF THE LAW

The wise and truly kind physician goes deep down and reaches the very seat of the disease. It may be, and almost certainly is, painful, but any other way is only to trifle with the evil he is called upon to cure. No one can read Wesley's Sermons and fail to realize that his perfect love to God and man manifested itself in the absolute thoroughness with which he probed the wounds of sin.

The first thing required now that God has provided Atonement is to convict mankind of their urgent need of Atonement, or in other words to bring them to Repentance. The New Testament word for Repentance indicates a 'change of thought' or a 'change of mind,' and this root meaning runs through Wesley's teaching concerning it. Two phases of thought are plain in our Standards. The 'change of thought' may be a change of thought regarding ourselves: or it may be a radical change wrought in our whole mind or spiritual being, the mind of the flesh being replaced by the mind of Christ. Thus in his Note on Matt. iii. 8, he says: 'Repentance is of two sorts: that which is termed *legal,* and that which is styled, *evangelical,* repentance. The former, which is the same as is spoken of here, is a thorough conviction of sin. The latter is a change of heart

(and consequently of life) from all sin to all holiness.' So on Luke xv. 8, he writes: 'That repenteth—that is thoroughly changed in heart and life'; while on Rev. ii. 5 he writes: 'Repent—which in the very lowest sense implies a deep and lively conviction of thy fall.'

But it is commonly in the first of these two senses that our Standards use the word. Thus in the Sermon on 'The Way to the Kingdom,' Vol. V, p. 81 ff, he gives one of the most tremendous statements about human nature which it would be possible to write:

'And first, repent; that is, know yourselves. This is the first repentance previous to faith, even conviction or self-knowledge. Awake then, thou that sleepest. Know thyself to be a sinner and what manner of sinner thou art. Know that corruption of thy inmost nature, whereby thou art very far gone from original righteousness, whereby the flesh lusteth always contrary to the Spirit, through that carnal mind which is enmity against God, which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Know that thou art corrupted in every power, in every faculty of thy soul; that thou art wholly corrupted in every one of these, all the foundations being out of course. The eyes of thine understanding are darkened, so that they cannot discern God, or the things of God. The clouds of ignorance and error rest upon thee, and cover thee with the shadow of death. Thou knowest nothing yet as thou oughtest to know, neither God, nor the world, nor thyself. Thy will is no longer the will of God, but is utterly perverse and distorted, averse from all good, from all which God loves, and prone to all evil, to every abomination which God hateth. Thy affections are alienated from God, and scattered abroad over all the earth. All thy passions, both thy desires and aversions, thy joys and sorrows, thy hopes and fears, are out of frame, are either undue in their degree, or placed on undue objects. So that there is no soundness in

thy soul; but " from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot " (to use the strong expression of the prophet) there are only " wounds and bruises and putrefying sores." '

He then goes on to speak of the knowledge of sins, i.e., of the fruits of the inbred corruption of man's very inmost nature: then of the knowledge of the punishment to which the soul is liable: 'This is the sentence, to " be punished " with never-ending death, with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power ' : then of the knowledge of our utter inability to help and deliver ourselves. It is worthy of special note that in this great statement Wesley lays the emphasis upon the knowledge of our Total Corruption of nature. Supremely, Repentance is that—a realization that we are utterly corrupt: not mere head knowledge, however, but a knowledge that affects the heart. Therefore he concludes, p. 84:

' If to this lively conviction of thy inward and outward sins, of thy utter guiltiness and helplessness, there be added suitable affections—sorrow of heart, for having despised thy own mercies—remorse, and self-condemnation, having thy mouth stopped—shame to lift up thine eyes to heaven—fear of the wrath of God abiding upon thee, of His curse hanging over thine head, and of the fiery indignation ready to devour those who forget God and obey not our Lord Jesus Christ—earnest desire to escape from that indignation, to cease from evil, and learn to do well;—then I say unto thee, in the name of the Lord, " Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." One step more and thou shalt enter in. Thou dost " repent." Now, " believe the Gospel." '

In such statements it is very easy to recognize the full meaning of the very concise and famous

statement that those are entitled to membership in the Methodist Societies who 'desire to flee from the wrath to come and to be saved from their sins.'

The great way to produce repentance in the human heart is the preaching of the Law. In his utter ignorance of himself, says Wesley, especially if he be a man of learning, a man thinks that he can repent when he will. He continually commits sin, yet he feels no condemnation, and is in no bondage. If ever an uncomfortable thought comes, he says to himself: 'God is merciful,' 'confounding and swallowing up all at once in that unwieldy idea of mercy, all His holiness and essential hatred of sin; all His justice, wisdom, and truth.' 'How can such an one be *convinced of sin?* How is he brought to *repent?* To be *under the law?* To receive the *spirit of bondage unto fear?*' (pp. 99, 100, 101, Sermon 9, on 'The Spirit of Bondage and Adoption.')

By some awful providence, or by His Word applied to the heart, God awakens such a man to perceive the nature of the Law, the justice of God, and his own terrible danger.

'The inward, spiritual meaning of the Law now begins to glare upon him. He perceives the "commandment is exceeding broad," and "there is nothing hid from the light thereof." He is convinced that every part of it relates not barely to outward sin or obedience, but to what passes in the secret recesses of the soul, which no eye but God's can penetrate. . . . And thus in every point he feels the Word of God "quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword." It "pierces even to the dividing asunder of his soul and spirit, his joints and marrow."' (Ibid, p. 102).

In his Sermon on 'The Original, Nature, Property, and Use of the Law,' Wesley dwells more fully upon the functions of the Law. Premising that 'the Law, eminently so called, is no other than the moral law':

'Now, this law is an incorruptible picture of the High and Holy One that inhabiteth Eternity. It is He, whom in His essence no man hath seen or can see, made visible to men and angels. It is the face of God unveiled; God manifested to His creatures as they are able to bear it; manifested to give and not to destroy life—that they may see God and live. It is the heart of God disclosed to man. Yea, in some sense, we may apply to this law what the Apostle says of his Son: It is the streaming forth or out-beaming of His glory, the express image of His Person.'

The Law is declared to be holy, just, and good; and as holy, it is, in its very nature, enmity to sin. It is the 'discoverer of sin.' It 'detects the hidden things of darkness, and drags them out into open day.' 'By this means, sin appears to be sin.' 'All its disguises are torn away, and it appears in its native deformity.' It is true, likewise, that 'sin, by the commandment, becomes exceeding sinful: being now committed against light and knowledge; being stripped even of the poor plea of ignorance, it loses its excuse as well as its disguise, and becomes far more odious both to God and man' (pp. 439 and 440). The Law reveals the desperate wickedness of the heart of man.

'It remains only to show, in the fourth and last place, the uses of the Law. And the first use of it without question is to convince the world of sin. This is indeed the peculiar work of the Holy Ghost; who can work it without any means at all, or by whatever means

it pleaseth Him, however insufficient of themselves, or indeed improper, to produce such an effect. And accordingly, some there are whose hearts have been broken in pieces in a moment, either in sickness or in health, without any visible cause or any outward means whatever; and others (one in an age) have been awakened to the wrath of God abiding upon them by hearing that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." But it is the ordinary method of the Spirit of God to convict sinners by the law. It is this which, being set home on the conscience, generally breaketh the rock in pieces. . . . By this the sinner is discovered to himself. All his fig-leaves are torn away, and he sees that he is "wretched and poor and miserable and blind and naked." The Law flashes conviction on every side. He feels himself a mere sinner. He has nothing to pay. His "mouth is stopped," and "he stands guilty before God." To slay the sinner is then the first use of the Law' (pp. 442 and 443).

The second use of the Law is 'to bring him unto life, unto Christ, that he may live'; and the third is to keep him alive (p. 443). The reason for these two further uses is more fully explained by Wesley in his Sermon 25, on 'Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, etc.' (p. 313). Surely, we are inclined to say, it is the function of the Gospel, not of the Law, to bring us to Christ and life. Therefore Wesley says:

'From all this we may learn that there is no contrariety at all between the law and the gospel: that there is no need for law to pass away in order to establishing the gospel. Indeed neither of them supersedes the other, but they agree perfectly well together. Yea, the very same words, considered in different respects, are parts both of the law and of the gospel: if they are considered as commandments they are part of the law; if as promises, the gospel. Thus, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," when

considered as a commandment, is a branch of the law; when considered as a promise, is an essential part of the gospel;—the gospel being no other than the commands of the law, proposed by way of promise.'

Thus the law not only reveals to us our desperate wickedness, making us feel our need of the Atoning Blood and the Purifying Spirit, but it also reveals what God's love designs to work in us.

'Therefore I cannot spare the Law one moment, no more than I can spare Christ. . . . On the one hand, the height and depth of the law constrain me to fly to the love of God in Christ; on the other, the love of God in Christ endears the law to me "above gold or precious stones"; seeing I know every part of it is a gracious promise which my Lord will fulfil in its season' (p. 445).

Therefore, Wesley will not for one moment allow that preaching Christ is to be distinguished from preaching the law. There are some 'whose grand plea is this: that preaching the gospel, that is, according to their judgement, the speaking of nothing but the sufferings and merits of Christ, answers all the ends of the law. But this we utterly deny. It does not answer the very first end, the convincing men of sin; the awakening of those who still sleep on the brink of hell.' (Sermon 35, p. 449.) 'There may have been here and there an exempt case. One in a thousand may have been awakened by the gospel. But this is no general rule. The ordinary method of God is to convict sinners by the law, and by that only. The gospel is not the means which God hath ordained, or which the Lord Himself used, for this end.' Those who imagine themselves to be whole will not give any heed to

the physician. It is absurd to bring the doctor to them. 'It is equally absurd to offer Christ to them whose heart is whole, having never yet been broken. It is, in the proper sense, casting pearls before swine.'

In these and other emphatic passages, our Standards enforce the immense importance of preaching the Law. Every preacher or leader or teacher would do well to lay to heart the wise words with which I conclude this article (p. 452, 'The Law Established through Faith'):

'Consider this well: that to preach Christ is to preach all things which Christ hath spoken; all His promises; all His threatenings and commands; all that is written in His book; and then you will know how to preach Christ without making void the law.'

IX

SALVATION BY FAITH

That faith and faith alone is the means of obtaining salvation is one of those messages which Wesley repeated many times over in the doctrinal Standards of our Church. Some few great positions, such as the Inerrancy of Scripture, the Total Depravity of human nature, the New Birth, the Assurance of Salvation, Faith as the one means of obtaining the gifts of God—these he repeats so frequently that it is very clear that he regarded them as fundamental and yet in danger of being rejected or ignored. That Salvation is by Faith alone is one of the hardest lessons to learn and one of the easiest lessons to forget of all the lessons of the Bible.

In addition to two Sermons devoted to the establishment of the Law through Faith, no less than three out of the forty-four Sermons are concerned with Salvation through Faith. So fully indeed does Wesley deal with Faith in the Sermons that he hardly treats of it at all in the Notes. Let us first notice Wesley's description of the Salvation which becomes ours on condition of Faith, and then his description of the Faith which obtains for us Salvation.

The first Sermon is on ' Salvation by Faith,' the fifth on ' Justification by Faith,' the sixth on ' The Righteousness of Faith.' All these terms have much the same meaning, although Salvation is

presented as a broader thing than Justification. 'The righteousness that is of faith' is explained as 'that condition of justification (and in consequence of present and final salvation, if we continue therein unto the end) which was given by God to *fallen man,* through the merits and mediation of His only-begotten Son.'

As to Justification, Wesley says:

'The plain scriptural notion of justification is pardon, the forgiveness of sins. It is the act of God the Father, whereby, for the sake of the propitiation by the blood of His Son, He showeth forth His righteousness (or mercy) by the remission of the sins that are past. . . . To him that is justified or forgiven God "will not impute sin" to his condemnation. He will not condemn him on that account either in this world or in that which is to come. His sins, all his past sins in word or deed, are covered, are blotted out, shall not be remembered or mentioned against him, any more than if they had not been. God will not inflict on that sinner what he hath deserved, because the Son of His love hath suffered for him. And from the time we are "accepted through the Beloved," "reconciled to God through His blood," He loves, and blesses, and watches over us for good, even as if we had never sinned.'

As to Salvation, he says:

'This, then, is the salvation which is through faith, even in the present world: a salvation from sin, and the consequences of sin, both often expressed in the word *justification;* which, taken in the largest sense, implies a deliverance from guilt and punishment, by the atonement of Christ actually applied to the soul of the sinner now believing on Him, and a deliverance from the power of sin through Christ *formed in his heart.* So that he who is thus justified, or saved by faith, is indeed *born again.* He is born again of the Spirit into a new life, which "is hid with Christ in God." And

as a new-born babe he gladly receives the "sincere milk of the Word, and grows thereby," going on in the might of the Lord his God, from faith to faith, from grace to grace, until, at length, he come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.'

(Sermon 6, p. 68; Sermon 5, p. 57; Sermon 1, pp. 11 and 12.)

Now, it was one of the supreme Messages which made the Revival that all this salvation, in every part, is entered upon by faith and by faith alone. What, then, is this Faith? Wesley answers (Sermon 5, pp. 60 and 61):

'Faith in general is a divine supernatural elenchos, i.e. *evidence* or *conviction*, "of things not seen," not discoverable by our bodily senses, as being either past, future, or spiritual. Justifying faith implies, not only a divine evidence or conviction that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself"; but a sure trust and confidence that Christ died for *my* sins, that He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*. . . .

'I cannot better describe the nature of this faith than in the words of our own Church: "The only instrument of salvation (whereof justification is one branch) is faith; that is, a sure trust and confidence that God both hath (forgiven) and will forgive our sins, that He hath accepted us again into His favour, for the merits of Christ's death and passion."'

For us to-day it is very necessary to emphasize the distinction between what Wesley calls the 'faith of a heathen' and the faith of a Christian. The heathen are required to believe that God is, and is a rewarder to those who diligently seek Him. But the faith of a Christian is 'faith in Christ: Christ, and God through Christ, are the proper objects of it.' Furthermore, although Wesley is very clear

that there is a necessary intellectual basis for faith, thus differing very widely from those who would have us think that no belief of the truth is necessary, but that irrespective of his beliefs a man can be saved, yet faith is far more than an assent of the mind to certain truths. That assent there must be, but it is not faith. In Sermon 7, on 'The Way to the Kingdom,' p. 85, he says:

'Only beware that thou deceive not thine own soul with regard to the nature of this faith. It is not, as some have fondly conceived, a bare assent to the truth of the Bible, of the articles of our creed, or of all that is contained in the Old and New Testaments. The devils believe this, as well as I or thou! And yet they are devils still. But it is, over and above this, a sure trust in the mercy of God, through Christ Jesus. It is a confidence in a pardoning God. It is a divine evidence or conviction that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing to them their "former trespasses"! and in particular, that the Son of God hath loved *me*, and given Himself for *me*; and that I, even I, am now reconciled to God by the blood of the Cross.'

This faith is faith in Christ as our sacrifice for sin, not faith in the mercy of God, as is so often represented to-day. It is abundantly clear that such faith is not possible without assent to the great articles of the Christian creed. Thus in Sermon 1, p. 9, Wesley writes:

'And herein does it (the faith that saves) differ from that faith which the apostles themselves had while our Lord was on earth, that it acknowledges the necessity and merit of His death, and the power of His resurrection. It acknowledges His death as the only sufficient means of redeeming man from death eternal, and His resurrection as the restoration of us all to life and immortality; inasmuch as "He was delivered for our sins

and rose again for our justification." Christian faith is then not only an assent to the whole gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ; a trust in the merits of His life, death, and resurrection; a recumbency upon Him as our atonement and our life, *as given for us* and *living in us;* and in consequence hereof a closing with Him and cleaving to Him as "our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," or in one word, our salvation.'

Finally, most emphatically does Wesley dwell upon this Faith as the one and only means of obtaining salvation. To-day many other means are being advanced, some of them within the Christian Church. For example, in the Conference of 1915, a well-known Methodist startled us by affirming that the soldier who dies upon the field of battle is saved by laying down his life. A decided 'No, no,' brought the speaker to a stop. 'Well, then,' he asked, 'what message are we to give to the relatives of the men who die?' We have, of course, no right to depart from the plain and decisive message that salvation is by faith and by faith alone. There were wars in the Bible days and wars in Wesley's days as well as in our days. It is only in our days that Christians think the Bible way of salvation has to be bettered or set aside. Our Standards teach that faith is the absolutely indispensable condition of salvation, and is the only condition.

Thus in his Sermon on 'Justification by Faith' (p. 61), Wesley says:

'By affirming that this faith is the term or *condition of justification*, I mean, first, that there is no justification without it. "He that believeth not is condemned already"; and so long as he believeth not, that con-

demnation cannot be removed, but "the wrath of God abideth on him." As "there is no other name given under heaven" but that of Jesus of Nazareth, no other merit whereby a condemned sinner can ever be saved from sin; so there is no other way of obtaining a share in His merit than *by faith in His name*. So that as long as we are without this faith, we are "strangers to the covenant of promise," "we are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and without God in the world." Whatsoever virtues (so called) a man may have—I speak of those to whom the gospel is preached; for what have I to do to judge those who are without?—whatsoever good works (so accounted) he may do, it profiteth not; he is still *a child of wrath*, still under the curse, till he believes in Jesus.'

Again, in the same Sermon (p. 62), he says:

'Faith, therefore, is the necessary condition of justification; yea, and the only necessary condition thereof. This is the second point carefully to be observed: that the very moment that God giveth faith (for it is the gift of God) to "the ungodly" that "worketh not," that "faith is counted to him for righteousness." He hath no righteousness at all antecedent to this, not so much as negative righteousness, or innocence. But faith is imputed to him for righteousness the very moment that he believeth.'

It is clear that in Wesley's day there was difficulty felt about this teaching, and Wesley set himself to remove all possible misunderstanding. Perhaps it would be wise in this day also to close with Wesley's answer to the statement that this is a difficult doctrine. In the same Sermon (p. 62) he says:

'Surely the difficulty of assenting to this proposition, that "faith is the only condition of justification," must arise from not understanding it. We mean thereby this much: that it is the only thing without which none is justified: the only thing which is immediately, indis-

pensably, absolutely, requisite to pardon. As, on the one hand, though a man should have everything else, without faith he cannot be justified; so on the other, though he be supposed to want everything else, yet if he hath faith, he cannot but be justified.

'For suppose a sinner of any kind or degree, in a full sense of his total ungodliness, of his utter inability to think, speak, or do good, and of his absolute meetness for hell-fire; suppose, I say, this sinner, helpless and hopeless, casts himself wholly on the mercy of God in Christ (which indeed he cannot do but by the grace of God), who can doubt but he is forgiven in that moment? Who will affirm that any more is indispensably required before that sinner can be justified?'

X

THE NEW BIRTH

The Methodist Standards deal fully only with a few central and essential doctrines of the Faith. There are some doctrines which bulk largely in the minds of some Christians to which only a very small reference is made, or even none at all. There is plenty of scope for the free exercise of the human mind, provided only that the fundamentals of the Faith are guarded faithfully.

As an illustration of this take the question of the New Birth. Upon that Wesley in his Sermons and Notes lays great emphasis. He has three Sermons out of the Forty-four which are entirely devoted to it. But he did not regard the teaching of the Established Church regarding Baptismal Regeneration as one of the fundamental things, and accordingly has nothing decisive to say about it. He emphatically states, and returns to it again and again (cf. *Works,* Vol. V, pp. 221 and 222, Sermon 18; Vol. VI, p. 74, Sermon 45), that the important question is not whether we have been baptized but whether we at the present time possess the indwelling Spirit of God; and the plainest utterance upon the subject is given on the last mentioned page

'From the preceding reflections we may, secondly, observe that as the New Birth is not the same thing as Baptism, so it does not always accompany Baptism: they do not constantly go together. A man may possibly be "born of water" and yet not be "born of the

Spirit." There may sometimes be the outward sign, where there is not the inward grace. I do not speak in regard to infants: it is certain our Church supposes that all who are baptized in infancy are at the same time born again; and it is allowed that the whole Office for the Baptism of Infants proceeds upon this supposition. Nor is it an objection of any weight against this, that we cannot comprehend how this work can be wrought in infants. For neither can we comprehend how it is wrought in a person of riper years. But whatever be the case with infants, it is sure all of riper years who are baptized are not at the same time born again. "The tree is known by its fruits." And hereby it appears too plain to be denied, that divers of those who were the children of the devil before they were baptized continue the same after baptism; "for the works of their father they do." They continue servants of sin, without any pretence either to inward or outward holiness.'

Thus upon this doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, Wesley uses indeterminate language. 'Our Church *supposes*' that infants when baptized are born again; but certainly all adults are not born again when baptized '*whatever may be the case with infants*.' Whatever Wesley's own beliefs about Baptismal Regeneration, in the Standards of our Methodist Church this is distinctly not regarded as a matter of essential Christian belief.

But the necessity of New Birth was a fundamental doctrine of the Revival. Whitefield so often preached from 'Ye must be born again,' that a friend at length said: 'Why do you preach so much from that old text?' and Whitefield quietly replied: 'Because ye *must* be born again.' Three of the Standard Sermons are devoted to it, viz., 18, on 'The Marks of the New Birth'; 19, on 'The

Privilege of those who are Born of God,' and 45, on 'The New Birth.' In addition, there are comments in the Notes of the same effect. The last of these Sermons is the most complete and definite, though the same account of the nature of the New Birth is given in Sermon 19 also: but Sermons 18 and 19 are really supplementary to Sermon 45, and are intended to guard those who believe themselves to be born again from making a deadly mistake in this vital matter. Let me then give briefly Wesley's account of the Foundation, Nature, and Necessity of the New Birth; and then indicate the manner in which he instructs all to test themselves whether they have in truth been born again.

I quote first from Sermon 45. In describing the *foundation* of the doctrine Wesley takes occasion to indite one of those tremendous statements regarding the depravity of human nature with which our Standards abound. He describes Man's creation in holiness, his Fall, the spiritual death which thence resulted, and concludes:

> 'The natural consequence of this is, that every one descended from Adam comes into the world spiritually dead, dead to God, dead in sin; entirely void of the life of God; void of the image of God, of all that righteousness and holiness in which Adam was created. Instead of this, every man born into the world now bears the image of the devil in pride and self-will; the image of the beast in sensual appetites and desires. This, then, is the foundation of the New Birth—the entire corruption of our nature. Hence it is, that, being born in sin, we must be "born again." Hence every one that is born of a woman must be born of the Spirit of God.'

Secondly, what is the *nature* of the New Birth? Wesley in both Sermon 19 and Sermon 45, dwells

upon the figure of speech which our Lord uses in John iii.:

'Before a child is born into the world he has eyes, but sees not; he has ears, but hears not. He has a very imperfect use of any other sense. He has no knowledge of any of the things of the world, or any natural understanding. To that manner of existence he has then, we do not even give the name of life. It is only when a man is born, that we say he begins to live. For as soon as he is born, he begins to see the light, and the objects by which he is surrounded. His ears are then opened, and he hears the sounds which successively strike upon them. At the same time, all the other organs of sense begin to be exercised upon their proper objects. He likewise breathes, and lives in a manner wholly different from what he did before.

'How exactly doth the parallel hold in all these instances! While a man is in a mere natural state, before he is born of God, he has, in a spiritual sense, eyes and sees not; a thick impenetrable veil lies upon them; he has ears but hears not; he is utterly deaf to what he is most of all concerned to hear. His other spiritual senses are all locked up; he is in the same condition as though he had them not. Hence he has no knowledge of God; no intercourse with Him; he is not at all acquainted with Him. But as soon as he is born of God, there is a total change in all these particulars. The "eyes of his understanding are opened"; and, He, who of old "commanded light to shine out of darkness, shining on his heart, he sees the light of the glory of God," His glorious love, "in the face of Jesus Christ." His ears being opened, he is now capable of hearing the inward voice of God, saying, "Be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee"; "go and sin no more." . . . He is now ready to hear whatsoever "He that teacheth man knowledge" is pleased, from time to time, to reveal to him. He "feels in his heart," to use the language of our Church, "the mighty working of the Spirit of God." . . . He feels, he is conscious of, a "peace which passeth all understanding." He many times feels such a joy in God as is "un-

speakable and full of glory." He feels "the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost who is given unto him"; and all his spiritual senses are then exercised to discern spiritual good and evil. . . . And now he may properly be said to live: God having quickened him by His Spirit, he is alive to God through Jesus Christ. He lives a life which the world knoweth not of, a "life which is hid with Christ in God."'

As to the third thing, viz., the *necessity* of the New Birth, Wesley declares it to be necessary to holiness, happiness, and heaven. Without the renewal of the heart in Regeneration there is no holiness: for holiness is not 'a round of outward duties, how many soever they be, and how exactly soever performed,' but the image of God stamped upon the *heart*. Moreover without this holiness, 'no man shall see the Lord.' People say: 'What danger can a woman be in that is so harmless and virtuous? What fear is there that so honest a man, one of so strict morality, should miss of heaven, especially if, over and above all this, they constantly attend on Church and sacrament?' Wesley asserts they must be '*born* again.' In a time when men are fatally prone to slur over the distinction between 'saved' and 'not saved,' we need to emphasize as Wesley did the vital fact of Regeneration.

'Do you say, "Nay, but I do no harm to any man; I am honest and just in all my dealings; I do not curse, or take the Lord's name in vain; I do not profane the Lord's day; I am no drunkard; I do not slander my neighbour, or live in any wilful sin." Still you must be born again. "I not only do no harm, but do all the good I can. . . . I constantly attend all the ordinances of God: I keep to my church and sacrament." It is well you do: but all this will not keep you from

hell, except you be born again. . . . None of these things will stand in the place of the New Birth; no, nor anything under heaven.'

Finally, in the two earlier Sermons Wesley most carefully guards his followers from making any mistake about their personal condition. If any one is born of God, that one will find the fruits of the Spirit manifesting themselves in him. Only on the main things does Wesley dwell. Sermon 18 says Faith, Hope, and Love will be the marks of the soul that is 'born again.' I cannot do better than quote the closing sentences of the Sermon. He is specially addressing some whose only confidence is that they were born again in baptism. For every one who has been leaning 'on the staff of that broken reed, that we *were* born again in baptism,' he prays that he may have power

'So to believe in Thy name as to become a child of God; as to know and feel he hath "redemption in Thy blood, even the forgiveness of sins"; and that he "cannot commit sin because he is born of God." Let him now be "begotten again unto a living hope," so as "to purify himself as Thou art pure"; and "because he is a son" let the Spirit of love and of glory rest upon him, cleansing him "from all filthiness of flesh and spirit," and teaching him to "perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord."'

Then in Sermon 19, with plainness and vigour, Wesley dwells upon the fact that 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin,' a matter upon which he dwells also in the earlier Sermon when speaking of Faith, for he who is born of God has a faith which is victorious over sin. He meets several difficulties which arise from the fact that some of

the saints *have* fallen into sin; and sums up his answer as follows:

'The more any believer examines his own heart, the more will he be convinced of this: That faith working by love excludes both inward and outward sin from a soul watching unto prayer; that nevertheless we are even then liable to temptation, particularly to the sin that did easily beset us; that if the loving eye of the soul be steadily fixed on God, the temptation soon vanishes away: but if not, if we are *drawn out* of God by our *own desire*, and *caught by the bait* of present or promised pleasures, then that desire, conceived in us, brings forth sin.

'Thus, "even he who now standeth fast in the grace of God, in the faith that overcometh the world, may nevertheless fall into inward sin, and thereby 'make shipwreck of his faith.' And how easily then will outward sin regain dominion over him!"

'Thou therefore, O man of God, watch always; that thou mayest pray without ceasing, at all times, and in all places, pouring out thy heart before Him! So shall thou always believe, always love, and never commit sin.'

XI

ASSURANCE

Salvation is not a dim peradventure but a glorious certainty. Those who have passed out of death into life were meant by God to be conscious of the change—a change in the very nature of their being and also in their destiny. It is plain to all who reflect that if salvation is left a matter of conjecture, and the soul can only *hope* that it has passed into life; if certainty is presumption, and doubt the manifestation of humility; then the glowing enthusiasm which meets us in the New Testament, and the courage and enterprise for God which resulted from it, would have been impossible. It is not easy to see how the work of Wesley, or indeed the work of Christianity itself, would have been possible apart from that certainty of personal salvation which sends a man forth strong and confident in God.

We do not wonder, then, that with the great and ceaseless strain of his revival work marked out before him, God gave to Wesley a deep sense of the need for that certainty of salvation, and so prolonged his training that he was likely to value and hold very fast the experience out of which so much of the fervour of his ministry was to flow. It was in 1738 that Wesley himself reached that blessed certainty, having passed at last through and out of

all the clouds with which the prince of this world had darkened the mind of a very unbelieving Church. But for long years he had been seeking that assurance which he only found in 1738. In 1725 we find him writing to his mother a letter which reveals the earnest seeker after assurance.

> 'If we dwell in Christ and Christ in us, certainly we must be sensible of it. If we can never have any certainty of our being in a state of salvation, good reason is it that every moment should be spent not in joy but in fear and trembling, and then undoubtedly we are of all men most miserable. God deliver us from such a fearful expectation as this.'

Someone sarcastically summed up the teaching of the pulpit in Wesley's early days in the following words: 'Religion: if you seek it, you won't find it; if you find it, you won't know it; if you know it, you have not got it; if you get it, you can't lose it; and if you lose it, you never had it.' No doubt that is good enough as a caricature; and Wesley went forth after his own soul had learnt the truth, to contradict every proposition in that summary: 'Salvation, if you seek it, you will find it; if you find it, you will know it; if you know it, you have got it; if you get it, you may lose it; but if you lose it, come back once more in penitence to God.' We ought to know and we may readily determine whether we are indeed the children of God, 'adopted by His grace into His family.'

Wesley sets forth the manner in which we become assured of our standing before God under the two heads—the witness of our own spirit, and the witness of the Spirit of God. With regard to the former, viz., the witness of our own spirit, he thus

explains it in his Sermon on 'The Witness of the Spirit' (p. 113 of his *Works*, Vol. V):

'With regard to the witness of our own spirit, the foundation thereof is laid in those numerous texts of Scripture which describe the marks of the children of God; and that so plain that he that runneth may read them. These are also collected together and placed in the strongest light by many both ancient and modern writers. If any need further light, he may receive it by attending on the ministry of God's Word; by meditating thereon before God in secret; and by conversing with those who have the knowledge of His ways. And by the reason or understanding which God has given him, which religion was not intended to extinguish but to perfect—according to that of the Apostle: "Brethren, be not children in understanding; in malice, or wickedness, be ye children, but in understanding be ye men" (1 Cor. xiv. 20)—every man applying those scriptural marks to himself may know whether he is a child of God. Thus, if he know, first, "as many as are led by the Spirit of God" into all holy tempers and actions, "they are the sons of God" (for which he has the infallible assurance of Holy Writ); secondly, I am thus "led by the Spirit of God"; he will easily conclude, "therefore I am a son of God."'

How are we to know that we have these marks of the children of God? Wesley replies (pp. 114 and 115):

'I would ask him, then, that proposes this question: How does it appear to you that you are alive, and that you are now in ease and not in pain? Are you not immediately conscious of it? By the same immediate consciousness you will know if your soul is alive to God. . . . Now this is properly the testimony of our own spirit, even the testimony of our own conscience, that God hath given us to be holy of heart, and holy in outward conversation.'

To this testimony another testimony is super-

added, viz., the testimony of the Spirit of God. Thus, in the same Sermon quoted above, p. 115, he writes:

'But what is the testimony of God's Spirit which is superadded to, and conjoined with, this? How does He "bear witness with our spirit that we are children of God"? It is hard to find words in the language of men to explain "the deep things of God." Indeed there are none which adequately express what the children of God experience. But perhaps one might say (desiring any who are taught of God to correct, to soften, or to strengthen the expression), the testimony of the Spirit is an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given Himself for me; and that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God.'

As to the manner in which this divine testimony is manifested to the heart, Wesley will not take it upon himself to explain. 'The wind bloweth, and I hear the sound thereof; but I cannot tell how it cometh, or whither it goeth . . . But the fact we know, namely, that the Spirit of God does give a believer such a testimony of his adoption, that while it is present to the soul, he can no more doubt the reality of his sonship, than he can doubt of the shining of the sun, while he stands in the full blaze of his beams' (p. 117).

The perils of such a doctrine as this are self-evident, and were perceived by Wesley as clearly as by ourselves. The natural mind is always prone to think of itself more highly than it ought. How is the real testimony of the Spirit with our spirits to be distinguished from the 'damning presumption' of the natural mind? A few sentences from

pp. 118, 119, and 120 of the same Sermon will indicate Wesley's plain answer to this question:

'The Holy Scriptures abound with marks whereby the one may be distinguished from the other. They describe in the plainest manner the circumstances which go before, which accompany, and which follow, the true genuine testimony of the Spirit of God with the spirit of a believer. Whoever carefully weighs and attends to these will not need to put darkness for light. . . . For instance, the Scripture describes repentance, or conviction of sin, as constantly going before this witness of pardon. . . . But he is a stranger even to this repentance; he hath never known a broken and a contrite heart. . . . Again, the Scriptures describe that joy in the Lord which accompanies the witness of His Spirit, as a humble joy; a joy that abases in the dust, that makes a pardoned sinner cry out, "I am vile! What am I, or my father's house? Now my eye seeth Thee, I abhor myself in dust and ashes." . . . But do these fruits attend the *supposed* testimony of the Spirit in a presumptuous man? Just the reverse. . . . Yea, perhaps there will sometimes appear a kind of fierceness in his air, his manner of speaking, his whole deportment, as if he were just going to take the whole matter out of God's hands, and himself to "devour the adversaries." . . . Once more, the Scriptures teach, "This is the love of God," the sure mark thereof, "that we keep His commandments." . . . A true lover of God hastens to do His will on earth as it is done in heaven. But is this the character of the presumptuous pretender to the love of God? Nay, but his love gives him a liberty to disobey, to break, not to keep, the commandments of God.'

Guarded by such keen searching of our life and heart, it is morally impossible that our claim to the witness of the Spirit will be the outcome of presumption. Preceded by deep conviction, such as Wesley describes again and again in his Sermons,

in such passages as I have quoted in Chapter V and elsewhere: accompanied by a joyful self-abasement before God: followed by an eager obedience to God's commandments—such an assurance, so guarded, cannot mislead us.

> Cheered by a witness so divine
> Unwavering I believe,
> And, Abba, Father, humbly cry:
> Nor can the sign deceive!

XII

ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION, OR CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

The mission of Methodism, as every Methodist knows, is to spread Scriptural Holiness throughout the land. Both words are worthy of all emphasis, for if two words are entirely typical of Methodism they are the two words Scripture and Holiness. Wesley's writings ring with these words through and through; and with reference to Holiness he notes, for example in his letters, that where the doctrine and experience of Entire Sanctification was neglected, there Methodism languished; and where that great theme was brought to the front, there the work of God revived. Can there be any real doubt that the reason why Methodism is at once the youngest and the largest of the Protestant Churches is that she has, especially at times, honoured the Scriptures and enthusiastically proclaimed their great and essential message of Entire Sanctification?

In the Standard Sermons Wesley, of course, returns to this great theme again and again whilst dealing with other doctrines of Scripture. But two of the Sermons are especially devoted to it, viz., 17, on the 'Circumcision of the Heart,' and 40, on 'Christian Perfection': whilst two other Sermons are largely concerned with the same subject, viz., 4, on 'Scriptural Christianity,' and 23, on the Sermon on the Mount, Discourse 3, 'Blessed are the Pure in Heart.' The Notes on the New Testament also contain brief expositions of many passages bearing upon the same subject.

Perhaps it would be wise to premise that the doctrine of Sanctification is the doctrine of a perfect change of *heart*. In many ways the life follows suit, as our Lord says: 'Make clean first the inside of the cup and of the platter, that the outside thereof may become clean also.' We get the right note in the glorious old hymn:

O for a HEART to praise my God,
A HEART from sin set free,
A HEART that always feels Thy blood
So freely spilt for me.
A HEART resigned, submissive, meek,
My great Redeemer's throne.

Let me first then describe the experience of Entire Sanctification, as Wesley describes it in our Standards: then the time and manner in which it is to be attained: and then mention two or three of his warnings regarding it.

First then, what is it to be entirely sanctified? What is the Circumcision of the Heart? In Vol. V, p. 203, he writes:

'In general we may observe, it is that habitual disposition of the soul, which, in the sacred writings, is termed holiness and which directly implies, the being cleansed from sin, "from all filthiness of flesh and spirit"; and by consequence, the being endued with those virtues which were also in Christ Jesus. . . .

'To be more particular: circumcision of the heart implies humility, faith, hope, and charity. Humility, a right judgement of ourselves, cleanses our minds from those high conceits of our own perfections, from that undue opinion of our own abilities and attainments, which are the genuine fruit of a corrupted nature. This entirely cuts off that vain thought, "I am rich and wise, and have need of nothing": and convinces us that we are by nature "wretched and poor and miserable and blind and naked." It convinces us that in our

best estate, we are, of ourselves, all sin and vanity: that confusion, and error, and ignorance reign over our understanding: that unreasonable, earthly, sensual, devilish passions usurp authority over our will: in a word, that there is no whole part in our soul, that all the foundations of our nature are out of course.'

This humility involves in itself a conviction of our deep sinfulness and also of our utter helplessness. Such a conviction is accompanied by willing acceptance of the truth that Faith alone is able to make whole. Such a faith, says Wesley (p. 204),

'is mighty to the pulling down of strongholds—to the overturning all the prejudices of corrupt reason, all the false maxims revered among men, all evil customs and habits, all that "wisdom of the world which is foolishness with God": it is such as "casteth down imaginations," reasonings, "and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God and bringeth into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

'This faith is "not only an unshaken assent to all that God hath revealed in Scripture . . . but likewise the revelation of Christ in our hearts: a divine evidence or conviction of His love, His free unmerited love to me a sinner."'

Following upon this there is naturally a 'lively hope.' He 'giveth them a lively expectation of receiving all good things at His hand: a joyous prospect of that crown of glory which is reserved in heaven for them' (p. 206).

These things—a deep humility, a steadfast faith, and a lively hope—go far to cleanse the heart from its inbred pollution. Yet one thing more is needed, and that is love. 'Add love, and thou hast the circumcision of the heart.' But what does this mean? What is it 'to love the Lord our God with

all our heart and mind and soul and strength' ?

'It is no other than this: The one perfect Good shall be your one ultimate end. One thing shall ye desire for its own sake—the fruition of Him who is All in all. One happiness shall ye propose to your souls, even an union with Him that made them: the having "fellowship with the Father and the Son": the being joined to the Lord in one Spirit. One design you are to pursue to the end of time—the enjoyment of God in time and in eternity. Desire other things so far as they tend to this. Love the creature as it leads to the Creator. But in every step you take, be this the glorious point that terminates your view. Let every affection, and thought and word and work, be subordinate to this. Whatever ye desire or fear, whatever ye seek or shun, whatever ye think, speak, or do, be it in order to your happiness in God, the sole end, as well as source, of your being.'

In Sermon 40 (pp. 207-8) he puts the same thing in a somewhat different manner in describing Christian Perfection. There he first emphatically reminds those who cherish the thought or experience of sanctification that every regenerate person has experienced such a change of heart *as not to commit outward sin*. This again he strongly enforces as the experience of the sanctified: and then turns to the question of inward sin. Only of those who are sanctified can it be affirmed that they are in such a sense perfect as to be freed from evil thoughts and tempers. First, from evil thoughts, for they have every thought brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ—always remembering 'that a thought concerning sin and a sinful thought, are widely different.' Secondly, they are freed from evil tempers, viz., from pride, from self-will, and from anger in the common sense of the

word—always remembering that there is a right kind of anger (pp. 16 and 17 of Vol. VI).

Yet again, in Sermon 4, he gives a great description of what manner of Christians they were when 'They were all filled with the Holy Ghost,' and at the close of the description exclaims: 'Such was a Christian of the ancient days.' I quote one paragraph only, in which he depicts the character of that love of God with which he was endued. Love dwelt in him, and accordingly,

> 'He was lowly of heart, little, mean, vile, in his own eyes. He neither sought nor received the praise of men, but that which cometh of God only. He was meek and long-suffering, gentle to all, and easy to be entreated. Faithfulness and truth never forsook him: they were "bound about his neck, and wrote on the table of his heart." By the same Spirit he was enabled to be temperate in all things, refraining his soul even as a weaned child. He was "crucified to the world, and the world crucified to him": superior to "the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life." By the same almighty love he was saved, both from passion and pride: from lust and vanity: from ambition and covetousness: and from every temper which was not in Christ' (Vol. IV, p. 40).

It is indeed a tremendous and glorious ideal of the Christian state: but it does not exceed the Scripture, and it does not involve the idea that at any time of our life we arrive at a condition in which all virtues are full-grown within us. At its greatest, Sanctification is only the beginning of perfect health. When, therefore, is this experience to begin? Wesley answers: 'Now: in this present life.' Some in his day heard this great doctrine and said:

'"True; we shall thus be saved from our sins: but not till death: not in this world." But how are we to reconcile this with the express words of St. John?—"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgement. Because as He is, so are we in this world." The Apostle here, beyond all contradiction, speaks of himself and other living Christians, of whom (as though he had foreseen this very evasion, and set himself to overturn it from the foundation) he flatly affirms, that not only at or after death, but in this world they are as their Master (1 John iv. 17).

'Exactly agreeable to this are his words in the first chapter of this Epistle (v. 5, etc.), "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." And again: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Now, it is evident the Apostle here also speaks of a deliverance wrought *in this world*. For he saith not, the blood of Christ will cleanse at the hour of death or in the day of judgement, but it "cleanseth" at the time present, "us" living Christians, "from all sin"' (Vol. VI, p. 18).

Upon what condition is this work wrought in us? In other words, is it of faith or of works? Some are like the Galatian Christians and think that having begun in the Spirit with the hearing of Faith we shall 'be made perfect by the works of the law.' I have already quoted two passages which give the answer. One is from Vol. V, p. 204. The same answer is given in Vol. VI, p. 17, where Wesley says: 'He therefore who liveth in true believers hath "purified their hearts by faith."' Similar statements are made in the Notes, e.g., the Note upon Acts xxvi. 18, 'that they may receive through faith pardon, holiness, and glory'; or the Notes upon the passage in Galatians which

deals with salvation being perfected 'in the Spirit' and 'through faith': thus, Wesley writes, 'Might receive the promise of the Spirit—which includes all the other promises. Through faith—not by works: for faith looks wholly to the promise' (Gal. iii. 1-14).

Then is it to be wrought instantaneously? Undoubtedly it is, for Wesley's argument will certainly apply to all matters of Faith: 'If by faith, why not now?' Yet at first sight this seems strangely contradicted by a very plain passage in his Sermon on 'The New Birth.' In this passage he criticizes a volume upon Regeneration which

> 'speaks of Regeneration as a progressive work, carried on in the soul by slow degrees, from the time of our first turning to God. This is undeniably true of sanctification; but of regeneration, the New Birth, it is not true. This is a part of sanctification, not the whole; it is the gate to it, the entrance to it. When we are born again, then our sanctification, our inward and outward holiness, begins; and thenceforward we are to "grow up in Him who is our Head." . . . A child is born of a woman in a moment or at least in a very short time. Afterwards he gradually and slowly grows, till he attains to the stature of a man. In like manner, a child is born of God in a short time if not in a moment. But it is by slow degrees that he afterward grows up to the measure of the stature of Christ.'

It is in consideration of what I have called above Wesley's warnings as to this experience that we can find the solution of these apparently contradictory teachings. The first of these warnings is meant to guard us from any idea that we reach a point at which progress ceases. This warning is given in Vol. VI, pp. 5 and 6:

'Neither is there any absolute perfection on earth. There is no *perfection of degrees,* as it is termed; none which does not admit of a continual increase. So that how much soever any man has attained, or in how high a degree soever he is perfect, he hath still need to "grow in grace," and daily to advance in the knowledge and love of God his Saviour.'

It is quite possible that Wesley's affirmation of the slow growth into sanctification refers to the 'perfection of degrees' which is never attained, to the slow growth, all through our course, in grace, in knowledge, and in love.

Probably another explanation is the true one, however. In Sermon 83, 'On Patience,' not one of the Standard Sermons, speaking of the Christian (Vol. VI, p. 489) he says:

'In the same proportion as a Christian grows in faith, he grows in holiness: he increases in love, lowliness, meekness, in every part of the image of God: till it pleases God, after He is thoroughly convinced of inbred sin, of the total corruption of his nature, to take it all away: to purify his heart, and cleanse him from all unrighteousness.'

Thus Wesley believed *that each step in the gradual progress of the Christian on toward perfect holiness is taken not through his own effort to advance, but through his claim of faith upon the saving power of God.* He believed also that when God has given many such proofs of His power and of His readiness to respond to the appeal of faith by His children, that *then a moment comes when He makes it possible to ask in faith for the perfect cleansing of the soul.* Thus there is a growth in holiness which should speedily make it possible for us to claim the largest promises of the

God who has been constantly proving to us His willingness and ability, now in one direction and now in another, to save from sin. This perfectly accords with my own experience.

And this is in keeping with the second warning which Wesley gives. Many to-day seem to imagine that the full heights of holiness will be easily and painlessly reached. Wesley sternly denounces those who 'hope to fulfil the commands of God without taking any pains at all,' and continues (Vol. V, p. 210):

> 'Vain hope! That a child of Adam should ever expect to see the kingdom of Christ and of God without striving, without agonizing, first "to enter in at the strait gate"—that one who was "conceived and born in sin" and "whose inward parts are very wickedness" should once entertain the thought of being "purified as his Lord is pure" unless he tread in His steps, and "take up his cross daily," unless he "cut off his right hand," and "pluck out his right eye and cast it from him"—that he should ever dream of shaking off his old opinions, fashions, tempers, of being "sanctified throughout in spirit, soul and body," without a constant and continued course of general self-denial.'

Thus Wesley warns us against imagining that we shall easily attain; or, as he would have certainly said, against imagining that God will bring the average Christian to the experience of perfect love without first bringing him through the stages of self-discipline, growth of faith, and growth of experience of His saving power. Yet Wesley also said that it was possible for a soul to be justified and sanctified at the same moment, though he had never known it done.

His third warning is that those who are made

perfect are not to expect the praise of men. They are not to desire it, and they are certainly not likely to get it! And this not only because the will of God which they obey is not likely to be pleasing to unregenerate men; but also, I imagine, because in the fourth place Wesley warns us that Entire Sanctification does not mean that we are set free from all the things that naturally and inevitably irritate our fellows. It will not set us free from *ignorance*: neither will it set us free from *mistakes* —'much love does not mean much light'—nor will it set us free from *temptations,* though for a time, and it may even be for a long time, we seem to have been lifted up above the level of temptation. We may no more expect to be free from temptations than our first parents, or our Divine Lord; nor as much. Moreover, we are not set free from *infirmities,* concerning which Wesley has some pungent words to say (Vol. VI, p. 4):

'Only let us take care to understand this word aright. Only let us not give that soft title to known sins, as the manner of some is. So, one man tells us, "Every man has his infirmity, and mine is drunkenness." Another has the infirmity of uncleanness: another that of taking God's holy name in vain: and yet another has the infirmity of calling his brother "Thou fool," or "returning railing for railing." It is plain that all you who thus speak, if ye repent not, shall, with your infirmities, go quick into hell. Such I mean hereby, not only those which are properly termed *bodily infirmities,* but all those inward or outward imperfections which are not of a moral nature. Such are the weakness or slowness of understanding, dullness or confusedness of apprehension, incoherency of thought, irregular quickness or heaviness of imagination. Such (to mention no more of this kind) is the want of a ready or retentive memory. Such, in another kind, are those

which are commonly, in some measure, consequent upon these : viz. slowness of speech, impropriety of language, ungracefulness of pronunciation : to which one might add a thousand nameless defects, either in conversation or behaviour. These are the infirmities which are found in the best of men, in a larger or smaller proportion, and from these none can hope to be perfectly freed till the spirit returns to God that gave it.'

Let us lay all these things to heart; and may the Divine Spirit of Holiness arouse within each one of us an ardent desire for the experience of Entire Sanctification, and a firm resolve that we will not cease to urge on our course until, by the sprinkling of the Blood of Jesus Christ, we stand within the Holiest of all. There is a rest that remaineth for the people of God, the rest from sin. O that we now that rest might know! After the Sermon on Christian Perfection, Charles Wesley's hymn is inserted, entitled ' The Promise of Sanctification.' There he cries out for deliverance from ' the old original stain ' :

Purge me from every sinful blot;
My idols all be cast aside;
Cleanse me from every evil thought,
From all the filth of self and pride.

Give me a new, a perfect heart,
From doubt, and fear, and sorrow free;
The mind which is in Christ impart,
And let my spirit cleave to Thee.

Hast Thou not said, who cannot lie,
That I Thy law shall keep and do?
Lord, I believe, though men deny;
They all are false, but Thou art true.

O that I now, from sin released,
Thy word might to the utmost prove!
Enter into the promised rest,
The Canaan of Thy perfect love!

XIII

ONE PROBATION AND TWO ALTERNATIVES: HEAVEN AND HELL

John Wesley believed and continually taught that there is an eternal glory to be sought by the children of men, and a way that leads to it to be eagerly entered and trodden. Equally he believed and taught unceasingly that there is an eternal horror to be shunned, and a broad way that leads straight into the abyss of eternal sin and night. He declares his great purpose to be to find the way to Heaven: and in the Standard Sermons he returns again and again and yet again to the theme of such supreme importance to us all—the narrow way which leads to life eternal and the broad way which leads to everlasting death.

He believed in Heaven: he believed in Hell. He believed that this life is the one probation; and that in this life we make an unspeakably solemn and eternal choice. Believing these things, he preached them, plainly, practically, passionately.

The famous words in the Preface to the Forty-Four Sermons, pp. 2 and 3, make his outlook very clear:

'To candid reasonable men I am not ashamed to lay open what have been the inmost thoughts of my heart. I have thought, I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit

come from God and returning to God: just hovering over the great gulf; till, a few moments hence, I am no more seen; I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing—the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God Himself hath condescended to teach the way: for this very end He came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price give me the book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri.* Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone: only God is here. In His presence I open, I read His Book; for this end, to find the way to heaven.'

It is true, not one of the Forty-Four Sermons deals specifically with Heaven, and not one of them deals specifically with Hell: but just as in the Notes on the New Testament there are many references to both Hell and Heaven, so and yet more thickly there are plain definite and emphatic references to both Heaven and Hell in the course of the Sermons. There is no Sermon specifically on the Being of God, but the Being of God is the underlying assumption of everything. So also we may truly say that the One Probation and the Two Alternatives are underlying assumptions throughout, whilst these also receive continual specific treatment.

Perhaps a few brief quotations will best give a view of the manner in which his mind is constantly dominated by the thought of Heaven:

'Rejoice, because by this mark also ye know unto whom ye belong; and "because great is your reward in heaven"—the reward purchased by the blood of the covenant, and freely bestowed in proportion to your sufferings, as well as to your holiness of heart and life. "Be exceeding glad"; knowing that "these light

afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory'' ' (Sermon 23, p. 291).

' That whensoever his earthly tabernacle is dissolved (he is speaking of the aim of the wise steward) they who were before carried into Abraham's bosom . . . may welcome him into Paradise, and into '' the house of God eternal in the heavens '' ' (Sermon 26, p. 376).

' Be not weary or faint in your mind : press on to the mark : take no denial : let Him not go until He bless you : and the door of mercy, of holiness, of heaven, shall be opened unto you ' (Sermon 30, p. 401).

' This (its narrowness) is the inseparable property of the way to heaven. So narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, unto life everlasting—so strait the gate—that nothing unclean, nothing unholy, can enter . . . He must not only be saved from all sinful actions, and from all sinful and useless discourse; but inwardly changed, thoroughly renewed in the spirit of his mind : otherwise he cannot pass through the gate of life, he cannot enter into glory ' (Sermon 31, p. 408).

' Now what are we to understand by that expression, '' That saith unto Me, Lord, Lord ''? It undoubtedly means, *that thinks of going to heaven by any other way than that which I have now described* ' (Sermon 33, p. 424).

So likewise it will probably give most quickly some sense of the way in which the terrible doom of Hell was never absent from Wesley's mind, if I quote a few of the common passages. Thus :

' That is (viz. to pray the Lord's Prayer if we do not ourselves forgive), in plain terms, '' Do not Thou forgive us at all : we desire no favour at Thy hands. We pray that Thou wilt keep our sins in remembrance, and that Thy wrath may abide upon us.'' But can you seriously offer such a prayer unto God? And hath He not yet cast you quick into hell? ' (Sermon 26, p. 340).

' Your love, your joy, your desire, are all placed on things which perish in the using. You have thrown

away the treasure in heaven. God and Christ are lost! You have gained riches and hell-fire!

'Oh how hardly shall those who have riches enter into the kingdom of God. . . . Oh ye rich, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? . . . Oh who shall warn this generation of vipers (those who desire to be rich) to flee from the wrath to come? . . . O man of God, speak and spare not. Cry aloud and show these horrible sinners the desperate condition in which they stand' (Sermon 28, pp. 368-370).

'Above all, cast out the grand beam, that supine carelessness and indifference! Deeply consider that one thing is needful; the one thing which thou hast scarce ever thought of. Know and feel that thou art a poor, vile, guilty worm, quivering over the great gulf' (Sermon 30, p. 396).

'Wide indeed is the gate, and broad the way that leadeth to destruction. For sin is the gate of hell, and wickedness the way to destruction' (Sermon 31, p. 406).

'But how terrible is this!—when the ambassadors of God turn agents for the devil!—when they who are commissioned to teach men the way to heaven do in fact teach them the way to hell!' (Sermon 32, p. 414).

Thus it will appear how large a place the thought of Heaven and the thought of Hell hold in the Sermons of Wesley. Moreover, this is the one probation, and it is here and now we make our choice between them. Never is there the slightest hint that there may be a second probation when this life is past. Thus in Sermon 3, p. 29, he writes:

'If I speak to any of you more than to another, it is to thee who thinkest thyself unconcerned in this exhortation. I have a message from God unto thee. In His name I warn thee to "flee from the wrath to come." . . . The night is far spent; the morning is at hand when thou art to be brought forth to execution. And in these dreadful circumstances thou art fast asleep;

thou art fast asleep in the devil's arms, on the brink of the pit, in the jaws of everlasting destruction! . . .

'Awake, thou everlasting spirit, out of thy dream of worldly happiness. . . . Thou art but a stranger, a sojourner upon earth; a creature of a day, but just launching out into an unchangeable state. Make haste. Eternity is at hand. Eternity depends on this moment; an eternity of happiness, or an eternity of misery.'

That is the unchanging note of our Standards, and this it is which very largely accounts for the intense urgency which marks every Sermon of the Forty-Four. Thus in Sermon 4, p. 42:

'So the Christians of old did. They laboured, having opportunity, to do good unto all men, warning them to flee from the wrath to come; now, now to escape the damnation of hell.'

Or again, take these words from Sermon 25, p. 327:

'Be serious. Let the whole stream of thy thoughts, words, and works be such as flows from the deepest conviction that thou standest on the edge of the great gulf, thou and all the children of men, just ready to drop in, either into everlasting glory or into everlasting burnings.'

This exhortation and warning Wesley repeats again in almost the same words in Sermon 33. So also in Sermon 28, he quotes a little triplet as his Sermon closes:

> No fair occasion pass unheeded by;
> Snatching the golden moments as they fly,
> Thou by few fleeting years ensure eternity!

It is this present life which offers us our opportunity. We have nothing beyond these few fleet-

ing years to use. Eternity trembles in this balance of time and is irretrievably settled now.

'Oh take warning of Him in whose name you speak, before the sentence He hath pronounced takes place: "Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire"! My dear brethren, harden not your hearts! You have too long shut your eyes against the light. Open them now before it is too late; before you are cast into outer darkness! Let not any temporal consideration weigh with you, for eternity is at stake' (Sermon 27, p. 422).

Or, once again, let me quote the passage on p. 431 of Sermon 33:

'Mourn for the sins and miseries of mankind; and see but just before your eyes, the immense ocean of eternity, without a bottom or a shore, which has already swallowed up millions of millions of men, and is gaping to devour them that yet remain! See here the house of God, eternal in the heavens! There, hell and destruction without a covering!—and thence learn the importance of every moment, which just appears and is gone for ever!'

'I am,' says Wesley in his Preface, 'a spirit come from God and returning to God: just hovering over the great gulf; till, a few moments hence, I am no more seen: I drop into an unchangeable eternity.'

These moments, then, these few fleeting years, are the time of our choice. The supreme question is being settled here, and it is settled for ever. Heaven is everlasting, and Hell is everlasting. No one questions that Heaven is everlasting; and in our Standards the warnings of the eternity of punishment are more frequent than the assurances

of eternal blessedness for believers. Let me therefore quote some of the passages in which everlasting punishment is taught with such plainness and emphasis that no one can doubt what Methodist teaching declares upon this point. In Sermon 7, p. 83, in one of those lengthy and searching appeals which abound in the Standards, Wesley cries out:

'And knowest thou not that the "wages of sin is death"—death not only temporal but eternal? "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. It shall die the second death. This is the sentence: to be punished with never-ending death, with "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." Knowest thou not that every sinner . . . "is under the sentence of hell-fire," doomed already, just dragging to execution? Thou art guilty of everlasting death. It is the just reward of thy inward and outward wickedness. . . . Dost thou see, dost thou feel this? Art thou thoroughly convinced that thou deservest God's wrath and everlasting damnation?'

Again, in Sermon 21, p. 256, he calls vehemently: 'Sinner, awake! Know thyself! Know and feel that thou wert shapen in wickedness, and in sin did thy mother conceive thee; and that thou thyself hast been heaping up sin upon sin, ever since thou couldst discern good from evil! Sink under the mighty hand of God, as guilty of death eternal.' Or when, in Sermon 31, he is lamenting how few there are whose souls are enlarged in love to mankind, he cries: 'How few are those lovers of God and man that spend their whole time in doing good unto all men; and are ready to suffer all things, yea death itself, to save one soul from death eternal.' Or he is speaking of

the wise man who built his house upon a rock: 'He knows the world—the place in which he is to pass a few days or years, not as an inhabitant but as a stranger and sojourner, in his way to the everlasting habitations' : and of the foolish man who built his house upon the sand—'it fell; and great was the fall of it. So that it perished for ever and ever.' (Sermon 33, p. 427). Or once more, in the passage quoted from p. 431 of Sermon 33, when he presents the alternatives—the house of God eternal in the heavens and hell and destruction without a covering: 'See,' he cries, 'but just before your eyes the immense ocean of eternity without a bottom or shore.' Limitless, endless! So, likewise, when he is depicting faithless Christians who do not impart the religion they have received: 'If the salt has lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? . . . How shall ye be recovered? What help? What hope? Can tasteless salt be restored to its savour? No; "it is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out," even as the mire in the streets, "and to be trodden under foot of men," to be overwhelmed with everlasting contempt . . . "If a man abide not in Me," or do not bring forth fruit, "he is cast out as a branch, and withered; and men gather them," not to plant them again, but "to cast them into the fire."' (Sermon 24, p. 300.) 'An unchangeable state!' 'An unchangeable eternity!'

With these teachings so firmly held and plainly given by our human Founder, is it any wonder that there are warnings of the most solemn and even terrible character which flow naturally from such convictions and find their place in the Sermons?

These warnings are sometimes directed to the unsaved, sometimes to the faithless professor, sometimes in particular to the faithless minister.

Speaking of the words, 'Wide is the gate and broad is the way,' he says (Sermon 31, p. 407):

'And many there be who go in at that gate; many who walk in that way—almost as many as go in at the gate of death, as sink into the chambers of the grave. For it cannot be denied that even in this which is called a Christian country, the generality of every age and sex, of every profession and employment, of every rank and degree, high and low, rich and poor, are walking in the way of destruction. The far greater part of the inhabitants of this city, to this day, live in sin; in some palpable, habitual, known transgression of the law they profess to observe. . . . These, then, none can deny are all in the way that leadeth to destruction.'

Thus Wesley gave plain and unfaltering warning to the general run of men and women that they were in danger of utter ruin. To faithless professors, unwilling to be peculiar and different from other men, he gave equally stern warning:

Settle it in your heart, and let it be ever uppermost in your thoughts that if you are in a broad way you are in a way that leadeth to destruction. If many go with you, as sure as God is true, both they and you are going to hell! If you are walking as the generality of men walk, you are walking to the bottomless pit! Are many wise, many rich, many mighty, or noble, travelling with you in the same way? By this token, without going any further, you know it does not lead to life. Here is a plain, a short, an infallible rule, before you enter into particulars. In whatever profession you are engaged you must be singular or be damned! The way to hell has nothing singular in it; but the way to heaven is singularity all over' (Sermon 31, p. 412).

And to the faithless minister perhaps his warning words are more stern than to anyone beside. Ministers who live in wilful sin, and 'people the regions of death'; the 'good-natured sort' of minister, who lives an 'easy, harmless life, neither troubling himself with outward sin nor with inward holiness,' and who therefore breaks all the great and weighty branches of the law which relate to the power of godliness; worse still, the minister who speaks evil of the law and teaches men to break even though it be only the least of the commandments—all these Wesley cannot away with. 'False prophets,' our Lord said. Many take the road to hell only to be with the crowd, a course which 'drowns numberless souls in everlasting perdition.' But what if God's own watchmen fall into this snare against which they should warn others? 'What shall be done if they point out as the way to eternal life what is in truth the way to eternal death'? Yet the instances of it are found in every age and nation, and 'they who are commissioned to teach men the way to heaven do in fact teach them the way to hell.' (Sermon 32, p. 414).

Sometimes such ministers come as angels of light: 'with an appearance of religion. All they do is for conscience' sake! They assure you that it is out of mere zeal for God that they are making God a liar! It is out of pure concern for religion that they would destroy it root and branch. All they speak is only from a love of truth, and a fear lest it should suffer; and, it may be, from a regard to the Church, and a desire to defend her from all her enemies' (Sermon 32, p. 417).

So I close with the words of terrible warning

(Sermon 32, p. 416) which Wesley addresses to the minister who teaches the way to Hell as the way to Heaven, particularly the minister who lowers the standard and encourages the worldly Christian to imagine that *he* is on the way to heaven :

'If it be asked, "Why, whoever did teach this, or does teach it, as the way to heaven?" I answer : Ten thousand wise and honourable men; even all those, of whatever denomination, who encourage the proud, the trifler, the passionate, the lover of the world, the man of pleasure, the unjust or unkind, the easy, careless, useless, harmless creature, the man who suffers no reproach for righteousness sake, to imagine he is in the way to heaven. These are false prophets in the highest sense of the word. These are traitors both to God and man. These are no other than the firstborn of Satan; the eldest sons of Apollyon, the Destroyer. These are far above the rank of ordinary cut-throats; for they murder the souls of men. They are continually peopling the realms of night; and whenever they follow the poor souls whom they have destroyed, "hell shall be moved from beneath to meet them at their coming."'

XIV

CONCLUSION

Such are the main doctrines of the Standard Sermons of John Wesley, and of his Notes on the New Testament. These are the chief strands of which those careful writings are woven. These themes, preached with uncompromising plainness, in the days of the Methodist Revival 'turned the world upside down.' Why are they not in like manner powerful to-day? Why are not the strongholds of Satan overthrown in the twentieth century as they were in the eighteenth? How is it that the hammer of the Word does not to-day, as of old, break the hearts of stone?

Is not *the answer, in the first place,* that so many contrary doctrines have been preached that the minds of multitudes are confused, and the minds of yet other multitudes predisposed to the acceptance of error in preference to truth, and that an atmosphere of scepticism prevails? Is not the answer, *in the second place,* that often when these doctrines are preached they are preached with so little plainness, point, and emphasis, that they have no chance of piercing the armour in which the sinner's mind is usually clad? Is not the answer, *in the third place,* that many of these great Bible truths are seldom preached at all? In what measure do the Methodist preachers and teachers of to-day plainly declare Total Depravity, the un-

flinching Law of Righteousness, the vicarious Atonement, Entire Sanctification, Everlasting Punishment, and this life as the one chance of making the eternal choice?

A passionate conviction of the truth of the Divine Word is the need of this century. We have never yet in our time attempted to discover what the Divine Spirit could effect if with one voice of passionate conviction we proclaimed the great messages of the Bible.

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